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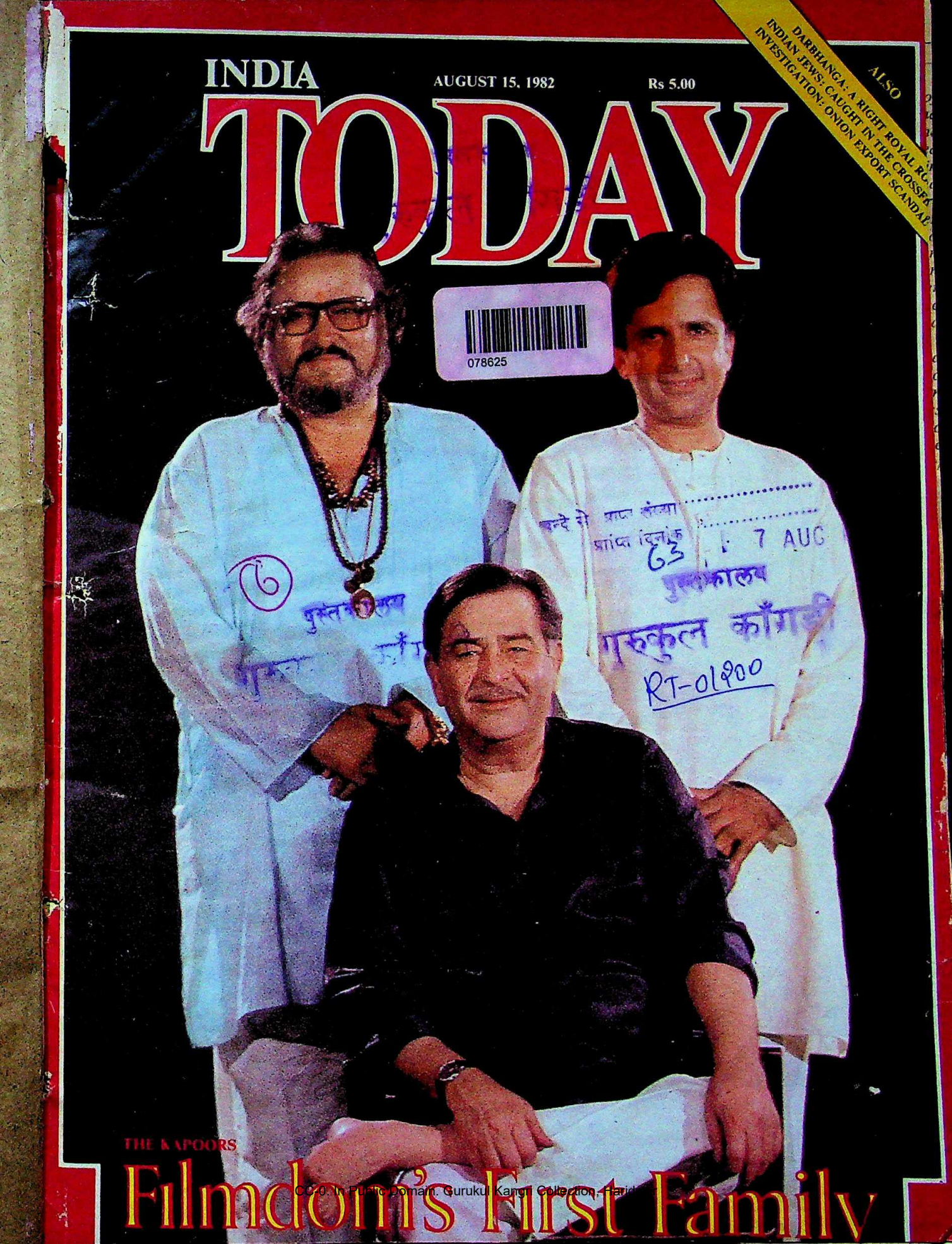

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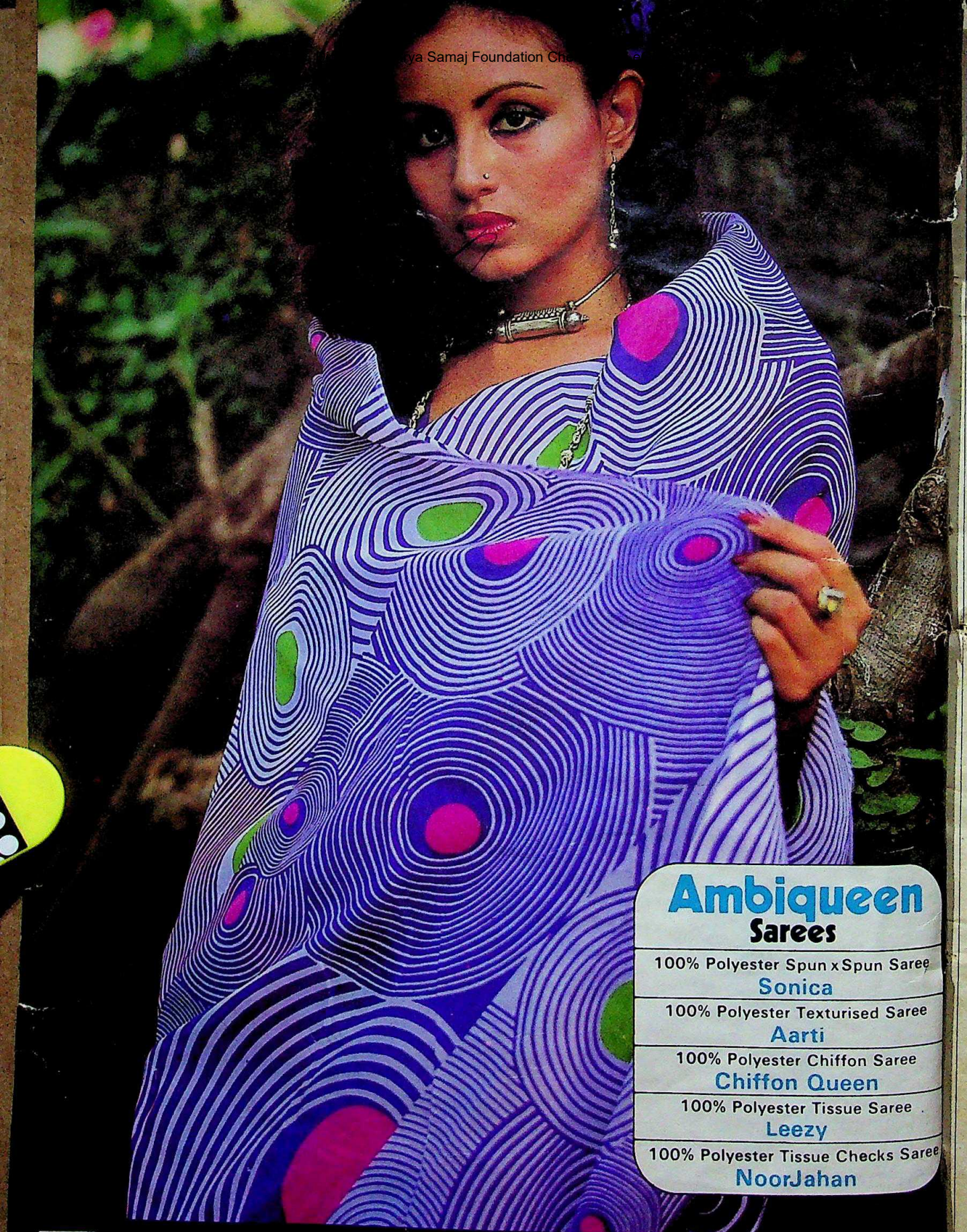

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THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

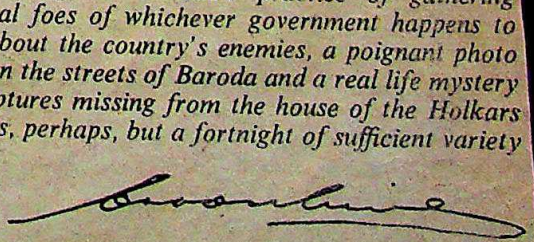
LIKE-PARENT-LIKE-CHILD families make news in India, some of it controversial, most of it eye-catching. Much energy, time and space has been expended by the media in keeping track of the Nehru-Gandhi clan which has so successfully, if unyieldingly, dominated the country's politics since Independence. This fact is amply reflected in the numerous cover stories INDIA TODAY *has devoted to Mrs Gandhi, and to a lesser extent to Sanjay, Rajiv and even once to the maverick daughter-in-law, Maneka. The magazine has tracked other news-making families in the dizzy world of high finance and entrepreneurship. Captain to industry J.R.D. Tata featured on the cover (December 31, 1981) when he yielded the post of chairman of Tata Industries to nephew Ratan Tata, signalling a generational shift within the tiny Tata family. Earlier in the year (March 16–31, 1981) the magazine had discussed the same phenomenon of a generational changing of the guard in family-dominated business, on a much wider scale.*

Now it is the turn of show business, where more than in politics and almost as much as in industry, the children of actors and actresses want to step into their parents' shoes. But no one name has dominated the Indian film scene so totally as the Kapoor family. Over three generations of actors and producers, from the late Prithviraj through Raj, Shammi and Shashi to the generation of Randhir, Rishi and Kunal, the family has remained in the heady limelight of the celluloid world. With the release imminent of Prem Rog, *head of the family Raj Kapoor's latest and probably last film,* INDIA TODAY *decided to look at the varied and changing fortunes of the Kapoors which, in a manner of speaking, is typical of the broad spectrum of the Indian film world.*

The Kapoors preparing for the photo session

To write the story, Correspondent SUNIL SETHI *drew on several years of experience in writing about the film industry and contacts built up during the years. Travelling to Bombay, Picture Editor* RAGHU RAI *spent two hours with the three elders of the family for a cover shot while Sethi spoke with them individually and collectively about their lives and activities. It was, clearly, impossible to meet everyone of the growing clan, who are in the forefront, have been there, or are trying to get there, of the film world. Even so, this fortnight's cover story is the first comprehensive look at the diverse talents of filmdom's first family.*

IT WAS a slow fortnight for political news in the traditional silly season. Appropriately enough, this issue carries a report on the tendency of government officials to take off for destinations abroad at the drop of a hat, a practice which drew a sharp rebuke from Mrs Gandhi herself. So it was time to look at other sorts of topics: the future of the Jewish community in India after the sudden expulsion of the Israeli consul from Bombay, the simmering family feud which has split the one-time royal family of Darbhanga, a controversial onion export deal which threatens to raise a stink, the Intelligence Bureau's practice of gathering intelligence on the political foes of whichever government happens to be in power rather than about the country's enemies, a poignant photo feature on an odd couple on the streets of Baroda and a real life mystery of two world famous sculptures missing from the house of the Holkars of Indore. Slow for politics, perhaps, but a fortnight of sufficient variety nevertheless.



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INDUSTRY'S KINGS

After reading "The Growth Kings" (July 31) I am convinced of a change in the Indian consciousness. And INDIA TODAY has been one of the pioneers of this change. Today the public is interested in a wide variety of subjects and even ones which deal with industry can find a popular audience.
Ranchi *Fazal Afaque Shere*

■ If we look behind the success stories we will see men who have been ruthless in exploitation and manipulation. To further their profits they have practised black marketing strategies. They are growth kings, yes, but at what social cost?
Bikaner *B.L. Sharma*

SHOCKING TREATMENT

The report "Slashing At Sight" (July 31) was painful as well as shocking. I cannot imagine how human beings can inflict such torture on others. All those who were responsible for causing blindness among villagers should be put behind bars.
Howrah *Dilip Kumar Porel*

A GOOD MOVE

The article on Indo-US relations ("A Quiet Optimism", July 31) was well-balanced. If we can get over our own rhetoric we will be able perceive that with regard to us, the US is more sinned against than sinning. But it seems odd that just when US aid has dried up and they have a President who is frankly against countries which have pretensions to socialism we have chosen to mend fences. But despite the timing, the move is a good one.
Bistupur *S.M. Haldar*

THE MISSING FILE

The special feature "Quid Pro Kuo" (July 31) revealed this shameful business graphically. Is the defiling of P-20 yet another indicator of the 20-Point Programme?
New Delhi *K.V.S. Menon*

BEDI ON THE BALL

Bishen Singh Bedi's report "England's Revenge" (July 31) was superb. As he said, our selectors have let the side down badly.
Bally *Chinmoy Mukherjee*
Mridula Mukherjee

■ It seems that Bedi was more interested in passing critical comments about team spirit and the selection process and did not see fit to comment on the game. And as far as team spirit is concerned Bedi's record has not been so clean.
Bombay *D.S. Singh*

THE LOYAL WINNER

The cover story "The Making Of A President" (July 15) highlights clearly the prime minister's shrewdness and sense of strategy. She is excellent in covering her real aims and confusing her opponents. And one must admit her choice is masterly—what a brilliant way to avoid a debacle in 1985!
Bombay *V.R. Parab*

■ With the nomination of Giani Zail Singh to the Presidency, Mrs Gandhi has again shown the contempt she feels for this country and the electorate. We need a President who is loyal to the country, not to an individual; not a buffoon and a sycophant. The prime minister should have no problems with her choice—he will probably come to 1 Safdarjang road to sign ordinances.
Jorhat *Ramesh K. Agarwal*

■ I have rarely seen a cartoon as powerful as the one by Abu on Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed during the Emergency.
Paradip Port *Bhaskar Parichha*

■ A bumbling, blundering home minister was bad enough, but elevating him to the position of President is really taking the country for granted.
Sagar *Sreelal Jain*

■ INDIA TODAY's cover story may have been opportune but was hardly ethical. It would have been more proper, as it was before the election, to have both the candidates on the cover.
Bombay *Bernie Tellis*

■ Commenting on a colleague, US Senator Thomas Gore had said: "He has every attribute of a dog except loyalty." He certainly could not say that about Gianiji.
New Delhi *Ashwani Talwar*

■ Truly, the office of the President has lost its sanctity. And the office has lost its dignity as the occupants have lost their impartiality.
Cuttack *Rizwana Akhtar*

DAY OF MOURNING

It was unfair to say in "Day Of The Gandhis" (July 15) that "for the Gandhis, June 23 was a day of business as usual". The day was a sad one for both Mrs Gandhi and Maneka and remarks like this one are callous in the extreme.
Ahmedabad *Kirit Trivedi*

DOWRY DEATHS

It is a painful fact that bride burning is on the increase ("Until Death Do Us Part", July 15). It seems that modernization, far from reforming, has increased the demands of young men and their parents. There is no way that dowry will be eradicated without their cooperation.
Dehra Dun *Savita Bhatia*

■ It would be helpful if, along with the article, a list of women's organisations fighting against this social evil was also published. This would not only have helped the victims, as most often they do not know who to contact, but would also have informed people who would like to help but do not know where to start.
Bombay *Suryakant Trivedi*

PALESTINIANS' PLIGHT

"Blitzkrieg In Lebanon" (July 15) is timely and thought-provoking. That the present Israeli Government is resorting to such blatant acts of terrorism should be no surprise to anyone familiar with Prime Minister Menachem Begin's past. He was chief of the notorious terrorist group, the Irgun Zvai Leumi, and he has carried this past into the present hostilities.
Gauhati *Dr S. Umar*

■ How can the Arabs with their petrodollars just stand by and watch the decimation of the Palestinians? Don't they realise that an unchecked Israel is a threat to them all?
Jaipur *Ram Sharma*

MENACE IN CHAMBAL

In the surrender of Malkhan Singh ("A Farewell To Arms", July 15) it was the police who came off worse. But it was not their fault—they were betrayed by certain politicians who, to stabilise their position, organised this whole surrender drama. But the precedent that has been set of having the dacoits surrender is going to recoil on the state Government as the crime rate in the Chambal is sure to increase rapidly.
Bhind *Rajender Singh*

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MYTH BREAKING

The article "The Lessons Of Luthar" (July 15) proved beyond doubt that even a public sector white elephant could be turned into an efficient, profit-making enterprise.

Jetpur *Navinchandra S. Dave*

GOOD WATCHDOG

The item "Gagging Grievances" (In The Air, July 15) very rightly talked about the way the careers of some officers in the army are sacrificed to promote those of others who have godfathers. The promotion system is full of defects and there is no way in which one can complain. INDIA TODAY is one of the first to focus on this sorry business.

New Delhi *P.K. Sinha*

BIASED CENSORS

"Battle Of The Bulges" (July 15) was a thorough exposition of the dangerous trends developing in the exhibition of films. Many commercial films, for purely box-office reasons, show the worst kind of vulgarity, sadism, violence and generally glamorise anti-social archetypes. Films, being the most popular organ of mass media, are particularly influential and therefore we must stop the exhibition of any that can play on susceptible minds. The censors have been exposed as a most questionable crew who can be pressurised into passing films of the worst kind. I think the time has come to punish any corrupt censor severely.

Bombay *Hameed Jaffrey*

■ The report tried to whitewash the sordid reputation of Malayalam films. If they are not half as bad as their hoardings make them out to be, how have they earned their notoriety?

Bangalore *Shashikala Pandcangi*

MORTGAGED FUTURE

The amount of loans we are asking for is truly alarming ("Asking For More", July 15). They will prove too heavy a strain on the national economy and to repay them we will need a miracle. Moreover, the image of India will suffer and we will always be associated with the begging bowl. And these requests for loans make a mockery of our claims of being self-sufficient.

Rohtak *Mukesh Sharma*

NADER WELCOMED

It was extremely interesting to read about Ralph Nader ("The Consumer Gandhi", July 15) as we are in great need of a person like him who can take up cudgels on behalf of the consumer. In a country where anything goes, the scope for a Nader is tremendous.

Madras *K.A. Balakrishnan*

SAVE FORESTS

Though tourism is in great need o development, it cannot be done at the cost o the environment ("Forest Fire", July 15 Pichavaram is a beautiful natural forest an to destroy it, would be a crime. Haven't w learnt our lessons from our other denude forests where soil erosion is rampant? W must save out forests.

Madras *K.T. Sangameswarar*

HOSTING TROUBLES

We were surprised to read "A Dip mat's Death" (June 30) which carried unfor tunate, baseless and non-authentic alle gations such as: "Mrs Aruna Nanda ha often acted as hostess for the Kuwait ambassador's official and private parties." The Embassy would like to state that th above quoted sentence is totally baseless.

Press Officer

New Delhi Embassy of Kuwa

Senior Writer Dilip Bobb was present a two such parties, both private affairs hosted by the ambassador at his residence, at which Mr Nanda acted as hostess.

—Edito

THE SECULAR LION

The interview with Sheikh Abdulla ("Nobody Can Topple Us", June 30) wa magnificent. INDIA TODAY faced the Lion roars and then amplified it through th magazine. I personally feel that the Sheikh a Lion of secular India. Looking at hi unbiasedly, one finds that he stands fo justice. In 1947 he fought the Muslim com munalists, today he reserves his fire for th Hindu ones. All of us who stand for a secula India should applaud him.

Shillong *Abu Ne*

DEFILING A MEMORY

The item in "Eye-catchers" (June 3 about Rajni Patel is unfair. Rajnibhai wa friendly with everyone and had no malic With his infinite knowledge, love and sym pathy he unconsciously attracted people t him. He was a man who lived by his prin ciples and helped anyone in need. Is ther any need to defile his memory with th particularly sordid incident?

Bombay *K.K. Thakka*

SAFE REVOLUTIONS

When Zainulabiddin Khan says: "Fo us, 1947 was a little bit like the Frenc Revolution," he is obviously exaggeratin ("Monumental Splendour", June 30) During most revolutions heads rolled whil Khan is still safe in his palace.

Houston, USA *A. Ghos*

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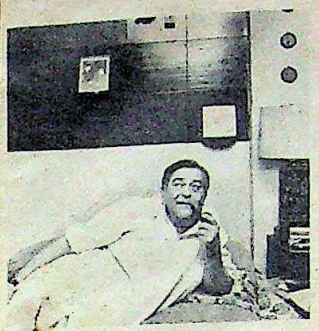
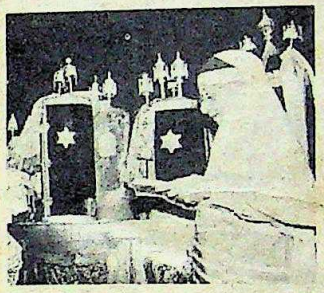
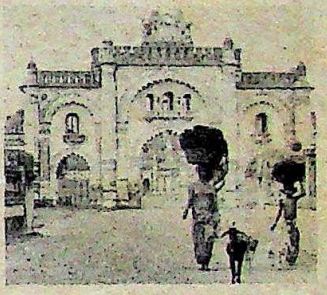


COVER STORY: Straddling the world's largest film industry, like corpulent collosus', the spreading Kapoor clan, over three generations and 53 years, has come to be synonymous with Hindi cinema. Initiated into the business by the late Prithviraj Kapoor, a towering performer in the theatre and films, his three sons and grandsons carry on a tradition that is unique in the Bombay film industry. **Page 120**

PHOTO FEATURE: On the grimy pavements of Baroda, passers-by daily witness a real life drama of a unique human relationship—a drama of poverty and passion, of insanity and innocence. The cast of two—an old blind man, wrinkled and weary-looking accompanied by a young deaf and short-cropped hair woman—play out their parts with touching sincerity. The story of the two inseparable companions with evocative photographs. **Page 50**



SPECIAL FEATURE: The decision, last month of the Indian Government to expell the Israeli consul Yousuf Hasseen from Bombay, and the possible closure of the Israeli consulate has evoked nervous reactions from the miniscule community of Jews living in India. The decision is interpreted by some prominent Jews as India's stand against the Israeli attack on Lebanon. An exhaustive report on the touchy situation. **Page 62**



SPECIAL REPORT: Once India's largest *zamindari*, the Raj Darbhanga has now been whittled down to a pathetic relic of its old glory. Intrigue, greed, and a no-holds-barred fight between the heirs of the late Maharaja Kameshwar Singh have led to a situation where even the chief minister of Bihar has taken sides, and a profusion of court cases are hanging fire. An in-depth investigation of the Byzantine mess. **Page 84**

INVESTIGATION: Recently when over 40 MP's sent a memorandum to the prime minister listing various "malpractices" within the 24-year-old National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED), their pleas to constitute an inquiry committee fell on deaf ears. An investigative report on the federation's alleged misdeeds. **Page 90**

THE ARTS: Constantin Brancusi, the celebrated Romanian sculptor executed two marble replicas of his famed *Bird In Space* for the Holkar of Indore in 1935. Suddenly a CBI search has begun for the birds, worth US $2.5 million, amid conflicting opinions expressed by the people concerned about their authenticity. **Page 138**

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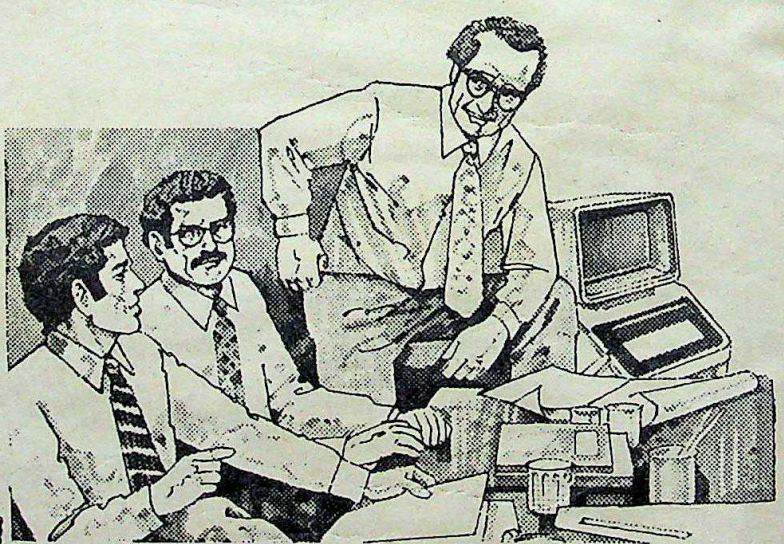

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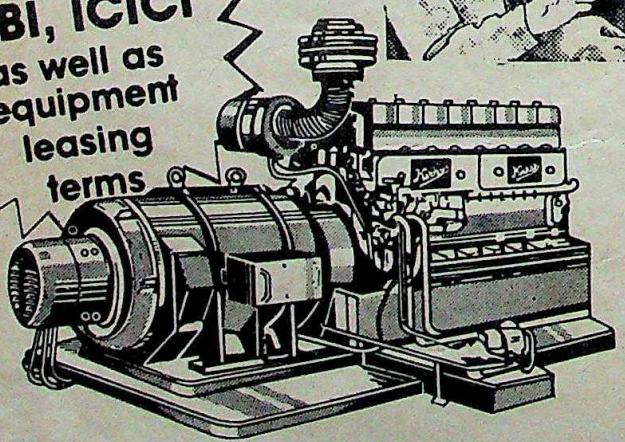

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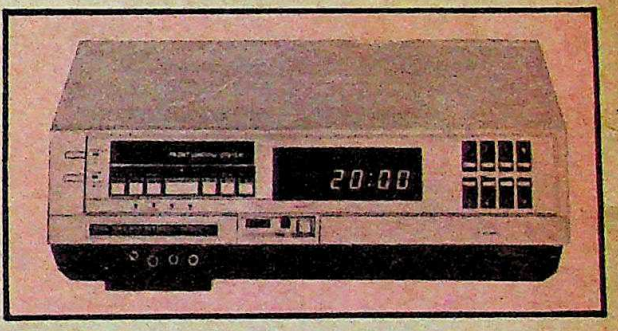

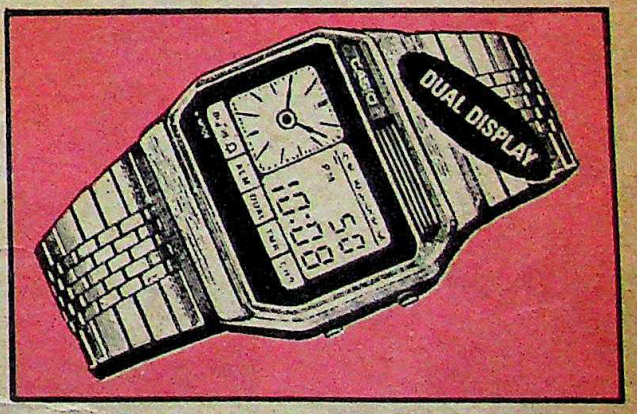

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A GUEST FROM LIBYA

COLONEL Mu'ammar Muhammad al-Gaddafi, the Libyan President, may visit India later this year. He has been writing to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi for some time now, inviting her to visit Libya. Mrs Gandhi has been replying saying it isn't going to be possible for her to go to Tripoli for quite a while due to her preoccupations. She asked Gaddafi to visit Delhi instead. Gaddafi hasn't responded to that one yet but reports from Tripoli say that he is looking forward to his India visit.

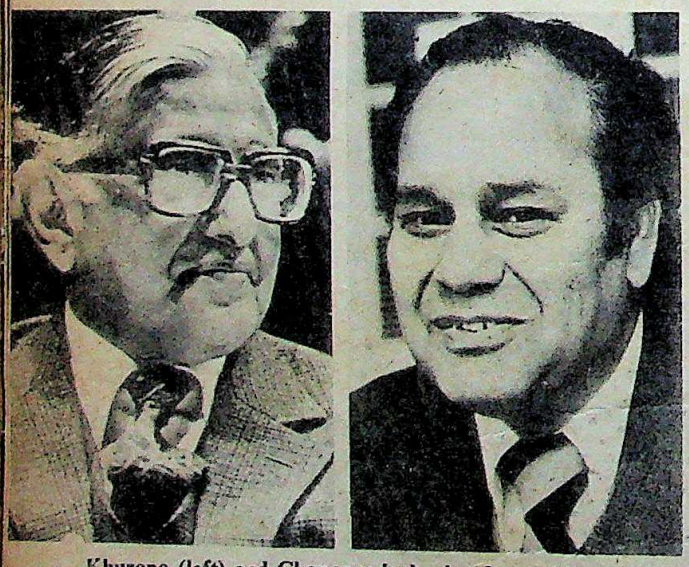
Observers believe that the *enfant terrible* of the Arab world may show up for the next meeting of the Indo-Libyan joint commission, scheduled later this year in Delhi. Nearly 60,000 Indian doctors, engineers, teachers and other professionals are presently working in Libya. Indian public sector firms have contracts worth US $2 billion to build power stations, airports and so on in that country.

AN UNKIND CUT

BOMBAY's long-suffering suburban commuters on the Central Railway will have to suffer for quite a while longer. The Railway Ministry has reportedly decided to divert the very scarce supply of new electric rakes to Delhi for the Asian Games. The ministry is obviously unaware of the pent-up frustration among Bombay commuters, which led to violent rioting on June 21. Production at Jessop and Company, Calcutta, which manufactures the rakes, has in any case been slow and far behind schedule, but now Central Railway bosses are faced with the prospect of having as many as 12 of their 59 rakes virtually in the junk yard, and no relief in sight.

CHANGE OF GUARD IMMINENT

A CHANGE at the top is under active consideration in the Delhi Administration. Charanjit Chanana, minister of state for steel, whose Rajya Sabha membership expired in April, is being seriously considered by the Prime Minister's Secretariat for the lieutenant-governorship of Delhi. S.L. Khurana, the

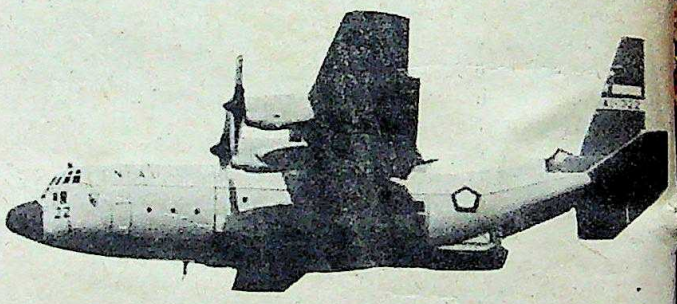


Khurana (left) and Chanana: jockeying for position

present lieutenant-governor, has been a candidate for the chopping-block for some time now, and Chanana is reportedly being backed by Delhi's Congress(I) MP's, who are gunning for Khurana. Informed sources, however, say that Chanana is in fact lobbying very hard for the deputy chairmanship of the Planning Commission, but the powers that be are not very willing to replace the present incumbent of that post, S.B. Chavan.

TRANSPORTS OF DELIGHT

CONTRARY to recent reports, Mrs Gandhi's Washington visit is not likely to result in any major aircraft deals. The US, according to sources, is likely to offer India its top of the line fighters like the F-5 and the F-16 but neither of the aircraft fits into the Indian Air Force's (IAF) scheme of things. However, the aircraft



The Hercules: on trial

that India is interested in is the C-130H-30 Hercules, the mammoth military freight transport and troop carrier. The aircraft, made by the Lockheed Corporation and one of the most successful freighters built, was last week in India for trials and evaluation and IAF sources say that the aircraft meets their requirement better than its main rival, the Soviet AN-32, which is also being evaluated as a replacement for the AN-12s and Fairchild Packets that are well past their prime.

THE KUO PLANT

NEW FACTS are surfacing about the mysterious 500,000 tonnes diesel oil deal by the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) in February 1980 (INDIA TODAY, July 31) with the Kuo Oil Company of Hong Kong. Two days before the deal was signed with IOC and Petroleum Ministry officials still digging in their heels, several Delhi newspapers carried a near-identical, unsourced news item which extolled the advantages of buying petroleum products at fixed rather than a variable price. Oddly enough, the item couched in language similar to that used to justify what turned out to be a disaster for India resulting in a notional loss of Rs 9 crore, leaving behind a trail of unanswered questions. It now transpires that the item came from certain Congress(I) sources and was used virtually unchanged in the form the information was received. And an interesting corollary to the episode was the case of a correspondent who had checked with IOC to be told that the news was baseless but was instructed by the owner of the paper to use it anyway.

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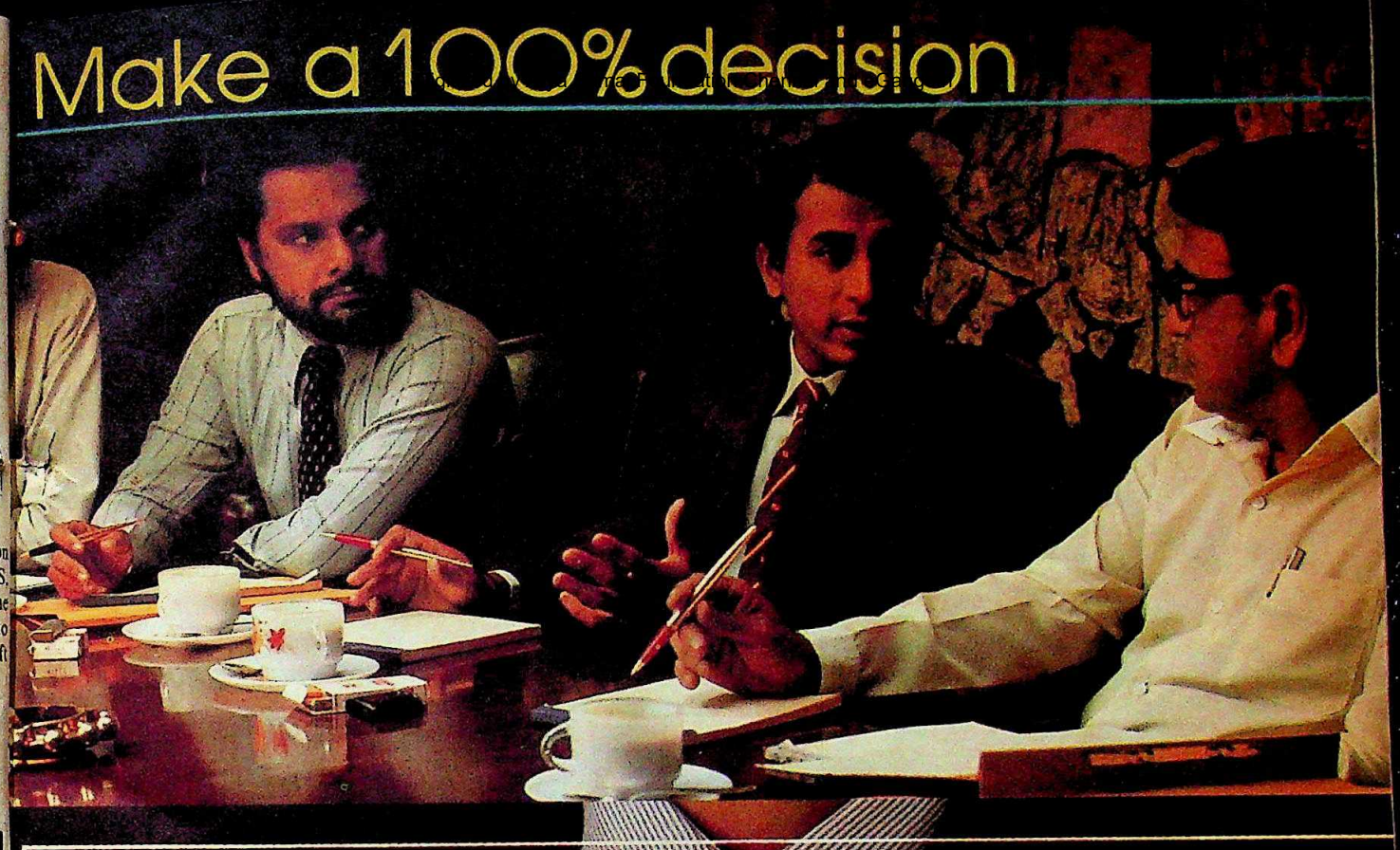

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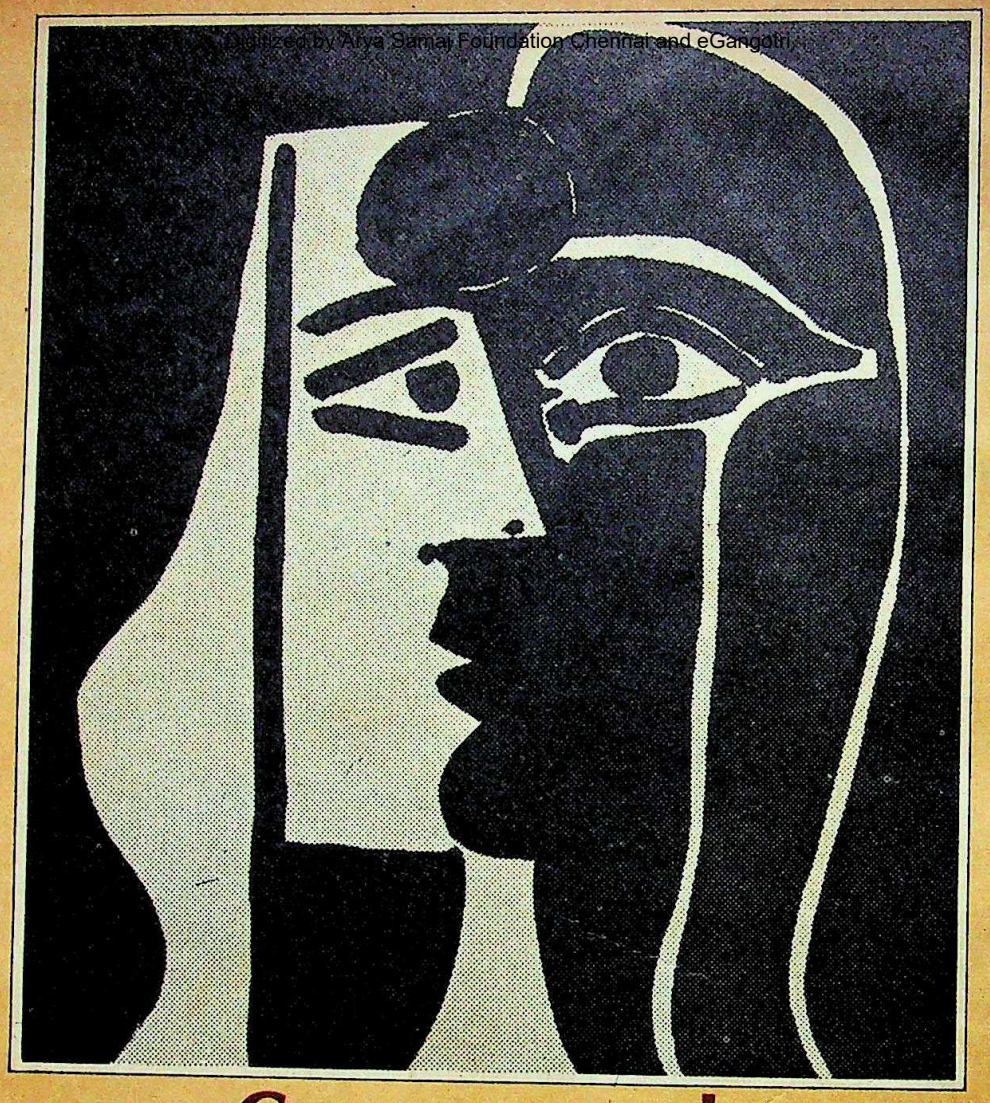

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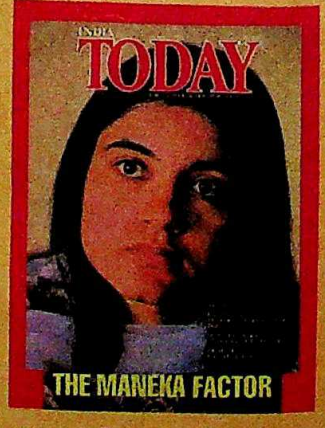

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» Indira Gandhi is two persons in one person—a very paradoxical person. One person is suffering from a disease of fear psychosis which is very contradictory to her other part which is very courageous and vigorous.

—*Tarakeshwari Sinha in* Celebrity

» If Chenna Reddy could come back after all the charges made against him, or if D.P. Mishra could stage a comeback, as he did despite allegations, I could also return. It is a question of time. Believe me, if they continue to push me, I will hit back.

—*A.R. Antulay in* Sunday

» His (Giani Zail Singh's) statement that he would "broom the floor" if called upon to do so by the leader, is positive proof of a mortgaged mind.

—*Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna in* Onlooker

» In 1969 Mrs Gandhi roared like a lioness to end big business houses' monopoly and so on. Today she is mewing like a cat and granting concessions to her big business friends.

—*Marxist member Somnath Chatterjee in the Lok Sabha in a discussion on the* MRTP *(Amendment) Bill*

» Legislators should henceforth be identified not as VIPs (Very Important Persons) but as VEPs (Very Easily Purchasables).

—BJP MP *N.K. Shejwalkar*

» Politicians have a lot to learn from you, Mr Bhajan Lal!

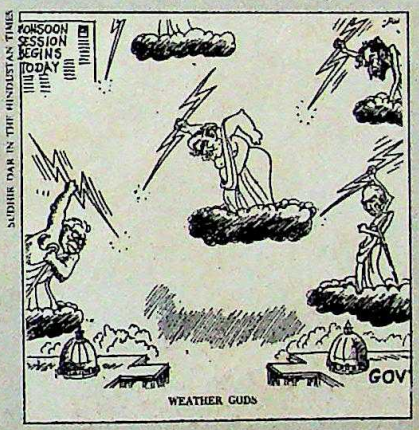
—*N.K.P. Salve, election agent of Zail Singh*

» In a state which has become the *adda* (den) of ticketless travellers, those who buy tickets are considered *bewakoofs* (fools).

—*Ram Bilas Paswan, Lok Dal* MP *in Parliament*

» May we remind Mr Antulay that he is a big zero without Mrs Gandhi's support.

—*Congress(I)* MP *Balasaheb Pawar in a press statement in New Delhi*



» If one's feelings about the Israelis are so strong that you refer to them as Nazis, then it would be best not to have even social relations with the Israeli consul. Would you drink with the Nazis?

—*Vinod Mehta in* Bombay

» The Congress(I) is nobody's private property.

—*Akbar Ahmed in* Gentlemen

» The defectors . . . are the keepers of the nation's political conscience, without them we would be totally unaware of the moral issues involved in politics . . . defectors being political weathercocks are genuine indicators of the nation's mood.

—*Egophil in* Patriot

» Mallika Sarabhai is the sexiest (actress) . . . Thank God, I'm not a man. I couldn't have directed the film with this sex-bomb around.

—*Sai Paranjpye in* Super

» The doctor (Jagannath Mishra) is making cinema the convenient scapegoat for the violence in his state which apparently he is unable to control

—*B.K. Karanjia in* Screen

» Our censors have fallen down on their job of protecting the people of this land from depravity and corruption in cinema.

—*Iqbal Masud in* Eve's Weekly

» I am not jealous of anybody, certainly not of Padmini Kolhapure! I have got everything that she has!

—*Rati Agnihotri in* Stardust

» Parliament has become a wall against which one can go on striking one's head.

—*Piloo Mody to newsmen in Lucknow*

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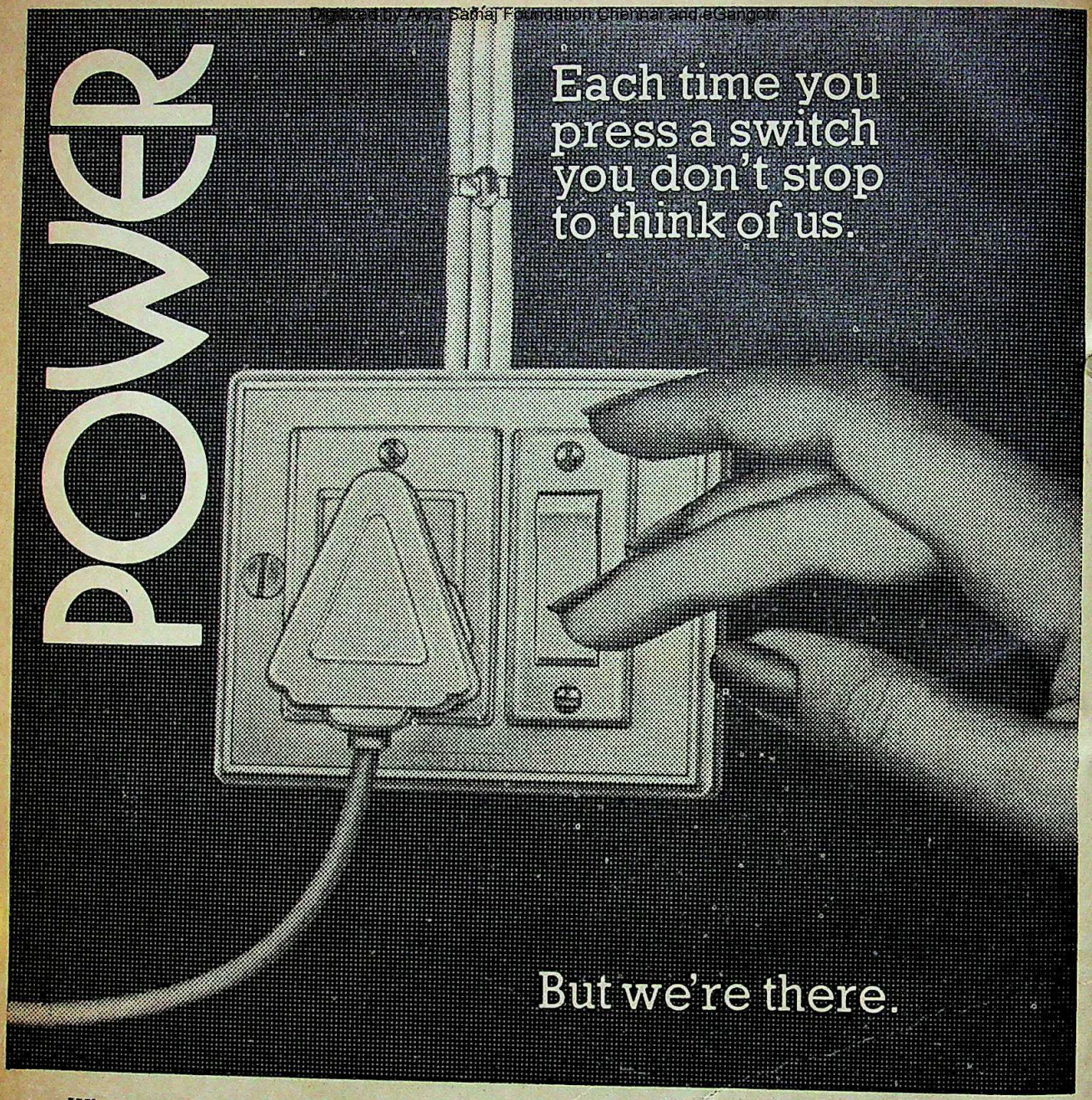

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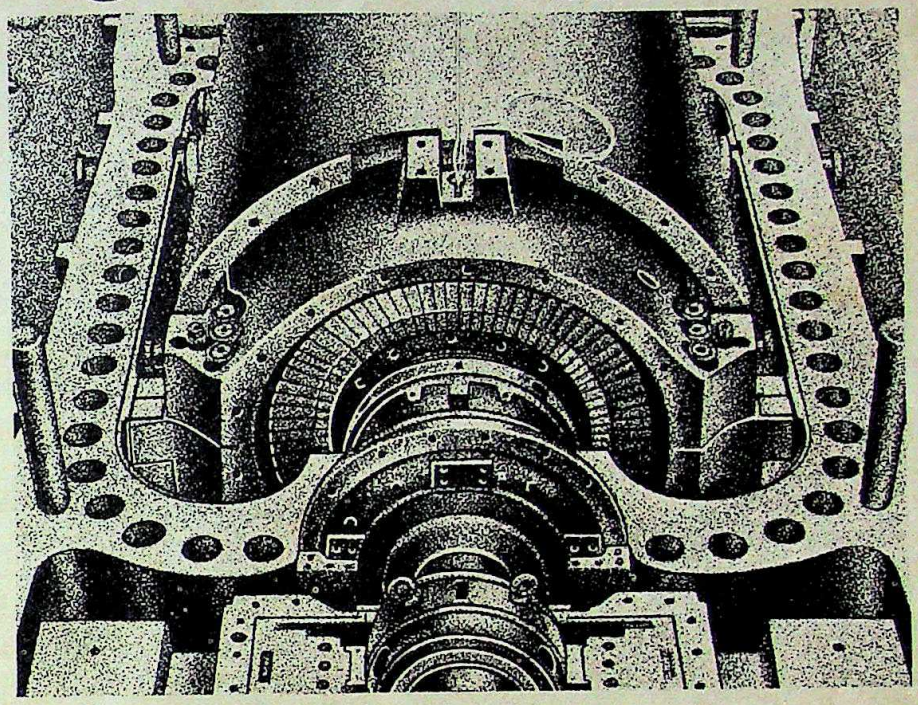
Welding Technology for the 80's



Everything you wanted to know about welding metallurgy ...and the 'futuristic' results possible today!

Welding Electrodes, Welding Metallurgy, Application Engineering...Here are a few selections to whet your appetite.

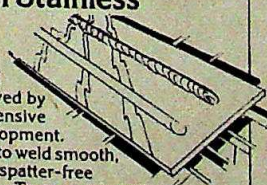
Hot tip for welding at sub-zero temperatures

For matters cryogenic:
PH 36 H(Spl) and PH 56 S (unalloyed) low hydrogen electrodes for applications up to −50°C;
PH 75 (2.5% Ni type) up to −60°C and PH 87 (3.5% Ni type) up to −100°C.

These electrodes are highly suited to the fabrication of vessels/ equipment in the chemical process industry.

Philips RS 304AB deposits an austenitic stainless steel weld with excellent impact properties at −196°C. It is used widely for applications like liquid oxygen tanks.

The smooth Stainless Steel Weld



Philips Stainless Steel Rutile-coated Electrodes—achieved by Philips through intensive research and development. Specially designed to weld smooth, almost ripple-and-spatter-free beads straight off!...To save you cost, time and labour in chipping and grinding.

Further: These unique Philips electrodes ensure deposits perfectly matched to the parent metal in chemistry and all properties. And they enable ease of operation and welding with low-heat input.

Basic-coated versions are also available to suit other critical applications.

The range of basic-coatings offers controlled percentage delta ferrite, guaranteed performance and perfect results.

Hard-facing problems? Philips electrodes make them easy to face

Case History: A major steel plant finds that vital cobalt-based electrodes are getting much too expensive...Philips provides a substitute at just one-third the cost with double the service life.

Surfacing 'tong pins' (for lifting hot steel billets) was a critical job. But the costly cobalt-based electrodes had to be replaced with a more economical substitute. The steel plant approached Philips with the problem...

After intensive development work, the Philips team produced a C-Cr-Ni-Co-Mo alloy that matched high-cobalt alloys in hardness characteristics at elevated temperatures. The result; PHILIPS 550. It cost two-thirds less and increased service life by as much as 1500 tonnes of ingot lifted!

For other hard-facing applications:

Philips Electrode	Hardness at R. Temperature in VHN
PH 250R	250–350
PH 250	250–300
PH 375	425–500
PH MN	250–550
PH MN(Spl)	250–550
PH 375 Ni	250–400
PH CSA	180–200
PH 600	550–650
PH 600B	550–650
PH 450	400–450
PH 410	300–350
PH 575	550–650

PHILIPS 550 is now part of the Philips standard range and in wide demand for surfacing components.

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You name the application and Philips can offer an electrode to match. Philips electrodes will continue to be the best answers to every future need. Rightly so, as Philips has access to the world's latest welding technology—be it consumables or equipment.

Philips engineers have done the 'impossible' in solving welding problems, again and again, setting an unmatched record in technical services. Through the last three and a half decades, Philips has made contributions of worldwide significance. And the quest goes on incessantly...

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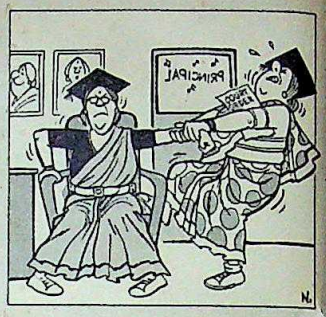
MUSICAL CHAIRS

■ There is nothing to beat decisive action, as Alexander of Gordian knot fame knew well. The students of a music college in Trivandrum, Kerala, are firm believers in the decisive action principle, and demonstrated as much on their principal.

There were, at the beginning of the story, two principals: M. Santhamma and M. Janaki. Santhamma and Janaki have apparently been enthusiastic antagonists in a bitter feud over who should be chief, and while Santhamma was away on leave, Janaki was appointed principal by the Directorate of Collegiate Education. Santhamma, not to be outdone in this game of musical chairs, returned from leave with a court order staying Janaki's appointment.

She strode triumphantly into the principal's room, brandishing her court order. However, Janaki refused to budge from her position since she had not received a copy of the court order and had not even been informed by the directorate of the change of guard. As she also refused to budge from the chair, Santhamma was at a loss.

The students were not. For a quite some time they had watched the antics of the two ladies, and now they decided to take a hand. Many hands, in fact: half a dozen of them gripped Janaki's chair with Janaki clinging desperately to it, lifted it smoothly off



the ground and carried it out of the room. Santhamma was given another chair by her respectful charges.

OPEN SCHOOL

■ A *chef d'oeuvre* is on view in Delhi, in L Block. Shakarpur, created by those magnificent men at the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). Ostensibly, it is a school, but the MCD has spurned the usual way of making a school—a building, desks, chairs, blackboards, offices—and gone in for something infinitely more existential.

On July 5, the school was

declared commissioned and five teachers were allotted to it. They set off one morning and came to a rubbish heap. Once a children's park, refuse, pigs, dogs and cats had long taken over the plot and when the pioneering five arrived there, the rubbish was letting off a most delightful aroma.

The teachers, slightly daunted by the discovery that the MCD's ideas on education differed so radically from all others, nevertheless set to work. They borrowed a *charpoy* from a neighbour and dragged it to the centre of the plot. Passers-by wondering what five well-dressed, educated people were doing with a solitary *charpoy* in the middle of all that muck, were told that it was the admission window, the principal's office and classrooms. Then they waited for the queues of parents to form.

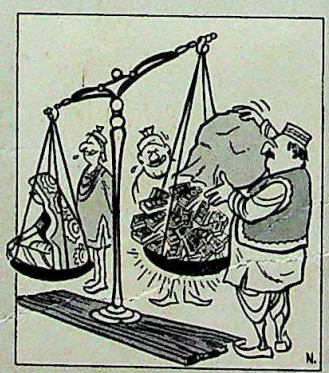
The reactionary people, however, did not come, put off perhaps by the stark, poignant reality thought up by the shy genius at the MCD. But art can accept no compromise and India may soon have a philosopher to rival Sartre.

WEIGHTY PURCHASE

■ So far, it has been the prerogative of the politicians to be presented with gifts of coins or currency related in some way or the other to their quite impressive weight—and how they revel in it! But a Gujjar girl from the Chamba Hills of Himachal Pradesh recently broke this monopoly.

A young man of the Gujjar tribe of a village near Gurdaspur in Punjab was travelling through the Chamba hills. He saw the girl and, to cut a long story short, fell in love with her. To cut another long story short, he brought her to his village, determined to marry her.

The thorns on the path of love were not long in manifesting themselves. Gujjar elders of the girl's village did not like the match and sent off a delegation to the boy's



village. Fortified by a satisfying feast, the two sides wrangled back and forth until they arrived at an eminently suitable arrangement: the girl's parents would pay the boy's parents Rs 1,000 for every kilogramme of her weight. A rugged pair of scales established her to be a healthy 70 kg. The boy's parents started counting Rs 70,000 as the girl and her family prepared for the high road home.

TOUR DE FORCE

■ The other day, a member of the Rajya Sabha came up with a very interesting suggestion, one of the more interesting suggestions to have emanated from that august body. Jagdambi Prasad Yadav told the house, in the form of a question, that all the members of Parliament should be taken on a guided tour of the four main pilgrimage spots of India. On the way they could also take in other pilgrimage spots.

Even the unusually talkative members were slightly put out by this bit of advice, until Yadav came out with his punch line: in the course of the tour the members could learn for themselves what had been done to develop tourism facilities in the country. The concerned minister, however, spurned the suggestion, saying that there was not enough money for such group tours.

It is indeed heartening to know that the people's hard-working and conscientious representatives are giving so much constructive thought to the continued well-being of the country.

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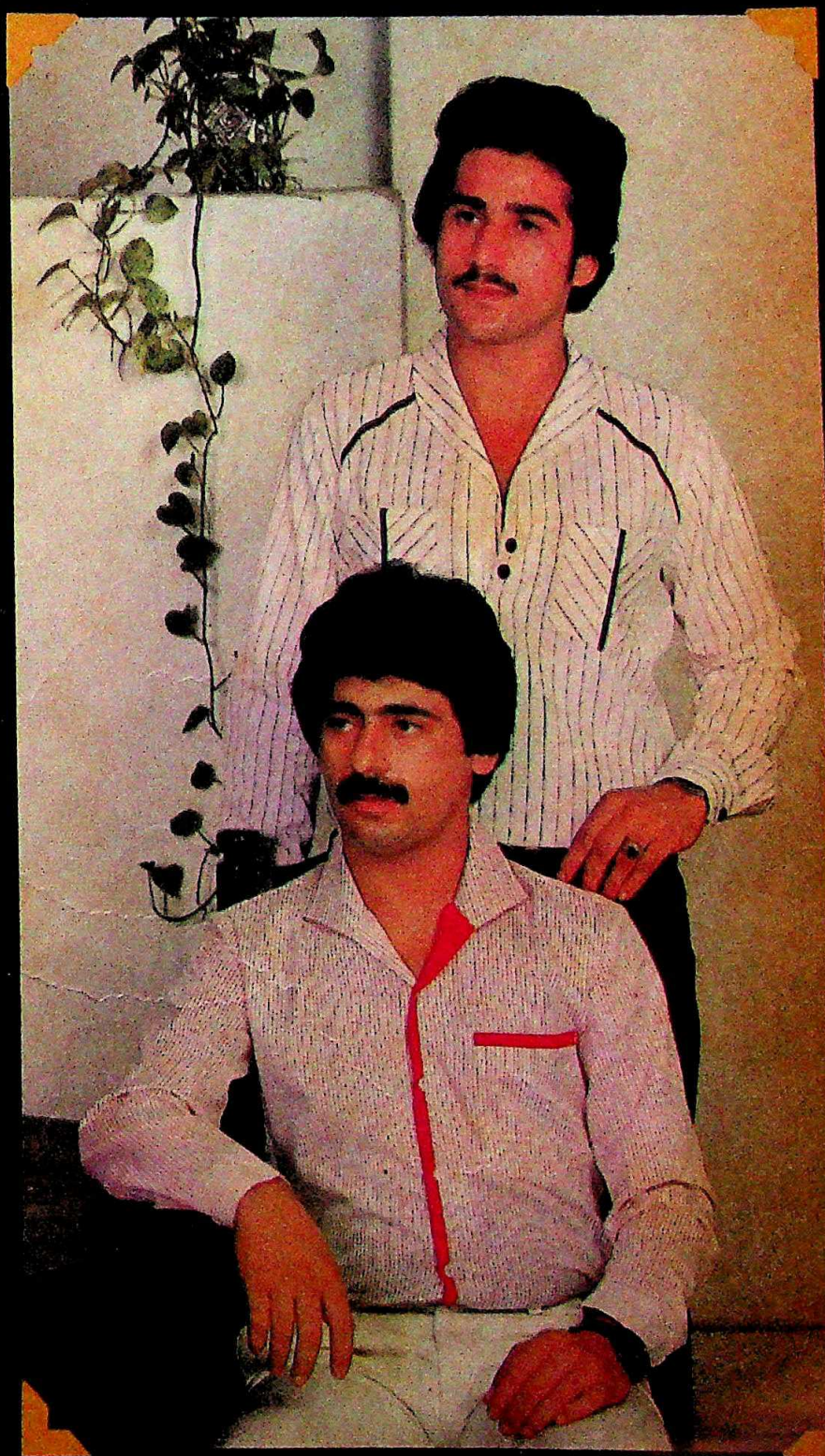

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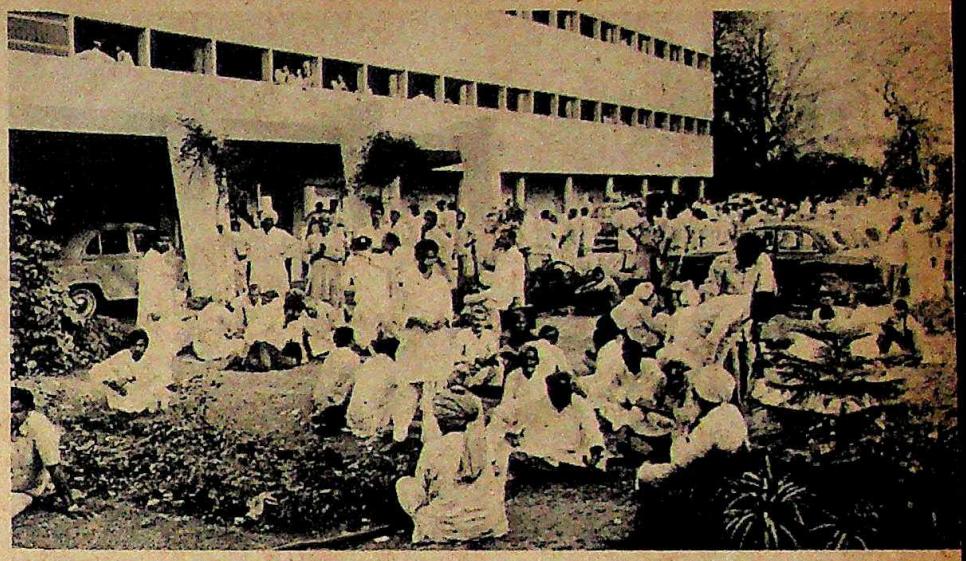
CONGRESS(I)

Mood Of Defiance



Dissident MLAs gathered at a state bhavan in Delhi: the mice that roared

THEY descended on New Delhi with the dark monsoon clouds. Armed with wordy petitions and soulful complaints, all directed against the state Congress(I) leadership, the invaders from the Indian states were around for a whole week, scouting for contacts that would find them an audience with Mrs Gandhi or Rajiv Gandhi, in that order. They packed themselves into the state government bhavans and residential quarters of friendly MP's. Striking an utterly discordant note in the party's moment of victory in the presidential election, the dissident MLA's—250 of them at one time—were suddenly gripped by a mood of unfamiliar defiance, as though some strange biological clock ticking in their system had told them that the time of change had arrived.

Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh—the states were different though the target of the complaints hardly varied. To satisfy the horde of in-house rebels would have meant for Mrs Gandhi to drop seven of the country's 17 Congress(I) chief ministers. Apart from the fact that such a request was quite impossible to carry out, the party high command was too embarrassed to even admit of the existence of heart-burning and grievances on such large scale. Said Vasantdada Patil, the tactful general secretary of the All India Congress Committee-I (AICC-I): "It's not true that all these visiting MLA's from the states are milling around in the capital only to see their chief ministers out of office. Many of them have come to share the party's sense of triumph at the presidential election."

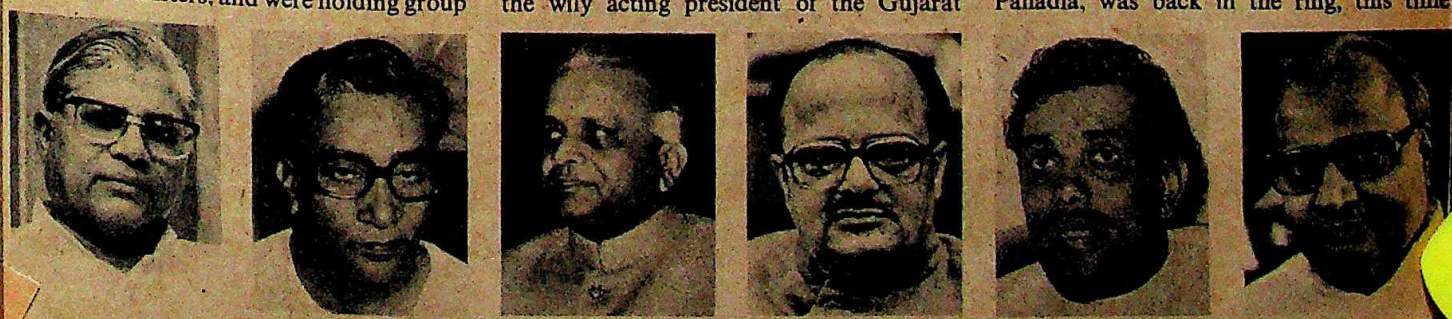
Determination: Patil's pronouncement could hardly have been greeted with cheers by the determined lot of MLA's, many of whom had brought with them reams of "evidence" against the alleged corruption of their chief ministers, and were holding group meetings at various places to chalk out strategy. Nor could they be shooed away by the party high command. As an aide of T. Anjiah, the deposed Andhra Pradesh chief minister who had been camping for a week in New Delhi, said: "If the prime minister listens to us, we don't go to the press. If she doesn't listen, we go to the press."

Particularly intractable was the Gujarat contingent, 24 MLA's in all, who, aided by 13 dissident Congress(I) MP's from the state, unleashed a bitter campaign against Chief Minister Madhavsinh Solanki. Later on the MP's, led by Narsimh Makwana, a member of the Harijan community, went in a deputation to the prime minister. When Mrs Gandhi refused to meet them, they left a memorandum on the desk of her special assistant, R.K. Dhawan, which urged her to send Solanki packing immediately. A defiant Makwana told INDIA TODAY: "Barring a couple of efficient and honest men, the council of ministers led by Solanki is useless. The chief minister is sheltering corruption and inefficiency. If the high command does not throw him out we will have to find an alternative ourselves."

Hard Bargaining: Lurking in the background to lend countenance to Makwana's angry antics was Mahipatrai Mehta, the wily acting president of the Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee(I) whose recent appointment came as a morale booster for the anti-Solanki faction. Mehta, also an MP, toured the length and breadth of Gujarat during the last couple of months, spouting venom against Solanki at party meetings. His natural allies are Yogendra Makwana and Maganbhai Barot, who were demoted and ousted in the last round of reshuffles in the Union council of ministers.

Nearly 20 MLA's had come from Andhra Pradesh, mostly with Anjiah, and were openly bargaining for their support to Chief Minister B. Venkatram, beleaguered by hostility within four months of his appointment. Anjiah had a ten-minute audience with Mrs Gandhi, but that did not satisfy him. Back in Hyderabad, his men pursued with renewed vigour their alliance with the Telugu Desam Party of matinee-idol N.T. Rama Rao, the single largest menace for the Congress(I), now poised for the assembly elections due early next year.

In Rajasthan, where peace was expected to return with the appointment as chief minister of Shiv Charan Mathur, non-controversial till then, a new sandstorm began brewing last fortnight. Narendra Singh Bhati, who had earlier led the crusade against former chief minister Jagannath Pahadia, was back in the ring, this time



(From left) Solanki, Venkatram, Mathur, Singh, Rao and Bhosale: shooting gallery

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against Mathur. About a dozen Rajasthan MLA's, now supporting Bhatti, claim that Mathur has failed to tone up the administration. They registered a token victory when the party high command last fortnight ousted Ram Narain Chaudhari, president of the Rajasthan Pradesh Congress Committee(I) and a former friend of Pahadia who had lately switched allegiance to Mathur, and replaced him with Nawal Kishore Sharma, a perfect fence sitter.

THE PARTY high command had allowed such minor concessions to dissidents recently in other states too, namely in Madhya Pradesh. Last year, when the state's heavyweight politician, Vidya Charan Shukla, was needling Chief Minister Arjun Singh, the high command warned him by way of suspending his battering ram, and Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee(I) general secretary, Lakshmi Narayan Induria, from the party. Now, after a year, the high command suddenly withdrew the suspension order on Induria, thus opening up a Pandora's box of dissidence. During July the ACC(I) office received 20-odd representations from Madhya Pradesh Congress(I) MLA's against Singh.

However, some MLA's from Karnataka, as also a group of half-a-dozen MP's from the state, were forcefully campaigning for the ouster of weighty Chief Minister R. Gundu Rao, as insurance against the danger of mass desertion from the party. They were obviously playing on the exit of S. Bangarappa, former party leader and Gundu Rao's anathema, though the mastermind behind them was K.T. Rathod, the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee(I) chief thrown out of office two months earlier on Rao's advice. Like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka too go to the polls early next year, with the sta Congress(I) organisation racked with i ternal dissension.

Mandate-less Leaders: In Maharashtr the country's most industrially advance state, dissidence in the ruling Congress(I) h irreparably damaged the authority of t state Government, an offshoot of which the costly six-month-long strike in Bombay textile mills which cannot be negotiated to end partly because the state leaders lack mandate. Last fortnight, Balasaheb Paw MP and vice-president of the Maharashtr Pradesh Congress Committee(I), emerged the latest champion of the dissidents' caus Pawar, who had never been overtly involve with the controversial former chief ministe A.R. Antulay, exploited this fact to h

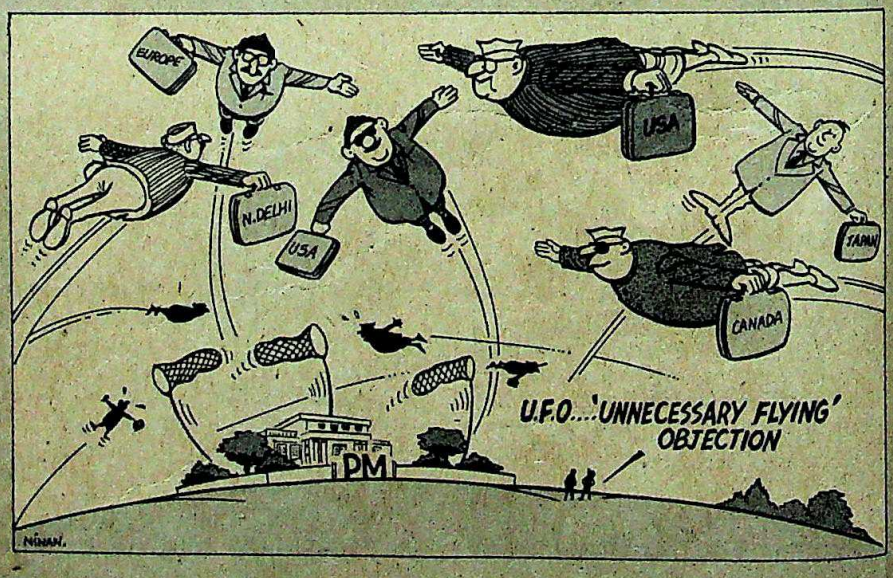
GOVERNMENT

Junketing Mania

THE TACIT campaign: "Join the Government and become an official globe-trotter," was being hastily revised early this month as the prime minister clamped down on the popular official sport of junketing. Mrs Gandhi's decision to cut down on junketing followed reports that the Union Government was spending over Rs 10 crore annually on foreign visits.

Early last month, she called a meeting of all secretaries and ministers and conveyed her disapproval of the growing tendency on the part of senior functionaries to take off at the slightest excuse. Last month, she cancelled the trip of a 12-member team headed by a former army official which was leaving for the US and other countries to "inspect electronics research laboratories". In another case, she directed the secretary of an important ministry to prune the delegation from 20 to only six. A proposal from the Agriculture Ministry to send a team for field study in the US and Canada at a cost of over Rs 5 lakh was also turned down by the prime minister. Her recent orders instruct minimisation of foreign tour expenses, and her prior approval if they involve officials above the rank of a joint secretary.

That the bureaucracy felt rather guilty about what has become an accepted perk of office, was evident in the pained 18-month silence that followed a routine parliamentary query in late 1980 demanding a statement of expenditure on official foreign visits. Last fortnight however, in the presence of august parliamentarians, the cat reluctantly emerged from the bag. Sterile statistics informed the representatives of the people that 1,875 officials and 30 ministers had covered almost the entire world in the first 10 months of 1980. And the total expenditure incurred on these ostensibly official visits was Rs 4.18 crore—an average of Rs 22,000 per person.



Astronomical Costs: Of the Rs 4.18 crore expenditure, officials spent Rs 3.63 crore, while Rs 13.96 lakh were incurred on 30 ministers. The figure does not include the prime minister's plane charter which cost an additional Rs 40.51 lakh. Interestingly, officials belonging to the six departments looked after by the prime minister herself accounted for over half the total expenses. Seven hundred and seventy-four officials of the departments of space, defence, atomic energy, science and technology, and the cabinet secretariat who went abroad with or without the prime minister spent over Rs 2.13 crore. Even among the prime minister's departments, over 300 senior officials from the space and energy departments squandered away over Rs 60 lakh in 10 months which means Rs 20,000 a day. According to the prime minister's secretary, each official over the level of deputy secretary and above has gone abroad twice in one year alone.

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dvantage. He hosted a dinner at Bombay's Cricket Club of India where 128 of the 238 MLA's were present. At the dinner, he vitupe- ated against Babasaheb Bhosale, the chief minister, seeking his removal, and was lu- stily cheered by the audience.

Pawar later argued that the 40 MLA's who had joined the party with Y.B. Chavan were "neutral" and as such would support any move to dislodge Bhosale that had not originated from the Antulay camp. He told INDIA TODAY: "Removal of Bhosale does not imply the reinstallation of Antulay. We want to rid the state of Bhosale's incompetent leadership but we don't want Antulay back by any means."

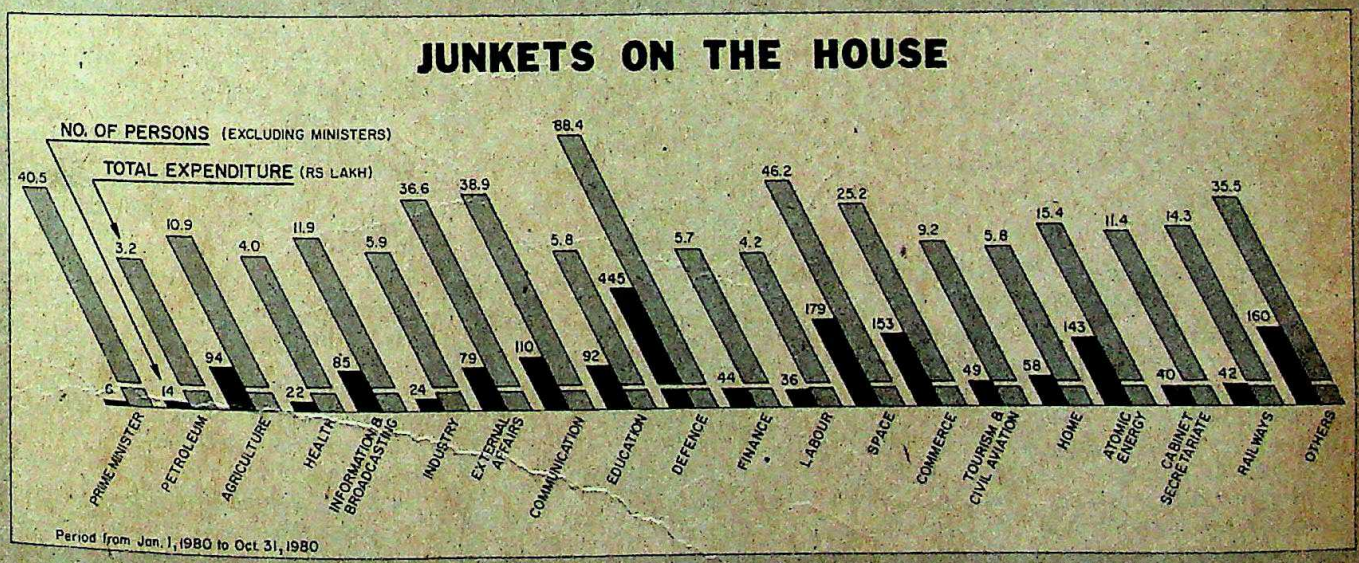
Mrs Gandhi left for the United States last fortnight without making any overtures to solve these nagging internal problems of her party. When she comes back, she has to pick up the thread setting to order the organisation in at least the two states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh where polls are due soon. But her options are limited in both the states; Karnataka has practically no second line of leadership after Gundu Rao, whereas in Andhra Pradesh the Congress(I) has been unable to find a competent administrator after Chenna Reddy, who was removed from the chief ministership in 1980.

Deep Fissures: In Maharashtra, the high command can disturb Bhosale only at the risk of playing into Antulay's hands. In Madhya Pradesh, any attempt to remove Arjun Singh, who is a Thakur, will have far-reaching repercussions. Combined with the impact of Uttar Pradesh chief minister V.P. Singh's resignation (*see page 31*), it will further alienate the Thakurs, who are wary of the latest developments in the Congress(I). With her eyes riveted to the 1985 general elections, these are gambles that Mrs Gandhi can ill afford now.

Vasantdada Patil sought to paper over the fissures in the Congress(I) edifice by arguing that "dissidence is a part of the party's democratic structure". But he too admitted that many of his partymen had recently been "emboldened" to press for the chief ministers' removal, because after having witnessed the "wooing back of dissidents in some states" they discovered the advantages of being rebels. Patil obviously meant Haryana, and was rightly hinting at the general mood in the party that stridency paid where capitulation failed. In the months to come, more and more mice in Mrs Gandhi's party are sure to roar.

—SUMIT MITRA

JUNKETS ON THE HOUSE



Next on the list is the Defence Ministry, 40 of whose officials on average left the country every month, followed closely by officials from the Communications Ministry including Posts and Telegraphs Department. The presence of an unusually large number of defence officials was presumably due to large-scale defence purchases during 1981.

While there is hardly a ministry or department which has not sent its officials on foreign jaunts, the all too frequent coming-and-going has evinced some acerbic comment. Quipped a senior Foreign Ministry official: "Most of these visits are undertaken for the sake of it. We have experts in each field posted in our missions abroad and they are competent enough to handle any job—be it defence, communication, science, commerce and of course external relations." To illustrate this the number of visits made by Foreign Ministry personnel were far less as compared to their counterparts in other ministries like Education, Culture, Social Welfare, Communications, and Food and Agriculture. Even the Home Ministry, having a hard enough time managing home affairs, dispatched 58 officials to countries like the US, UK, East European countries, and South-East Asia.

According to the rules, each official who goes abroad is expected to submit a report about his visit which is then followed by the ministries concerned. But, according to Foreign Ministry sources, a majority of the delegations hardly submit a detailed report which can be used for improving external relations. Most of these trips continue to be justified by various ministries on ambiguous grounds like "strengthening commercial relations, participation in international symposia and conferences, to initiate talks for bilateral trade, cultural and economic relations and to promote tourism".

All this only goes to show that the current restraint is well founded. Nevertheless, the proof of the pudding distinctly remains in the eating. Since the Prime Minister's Secretariat leads the field with an impressive track record in the field of official junketing it may provide an excuse to other to flout her directive—in 'public interest'.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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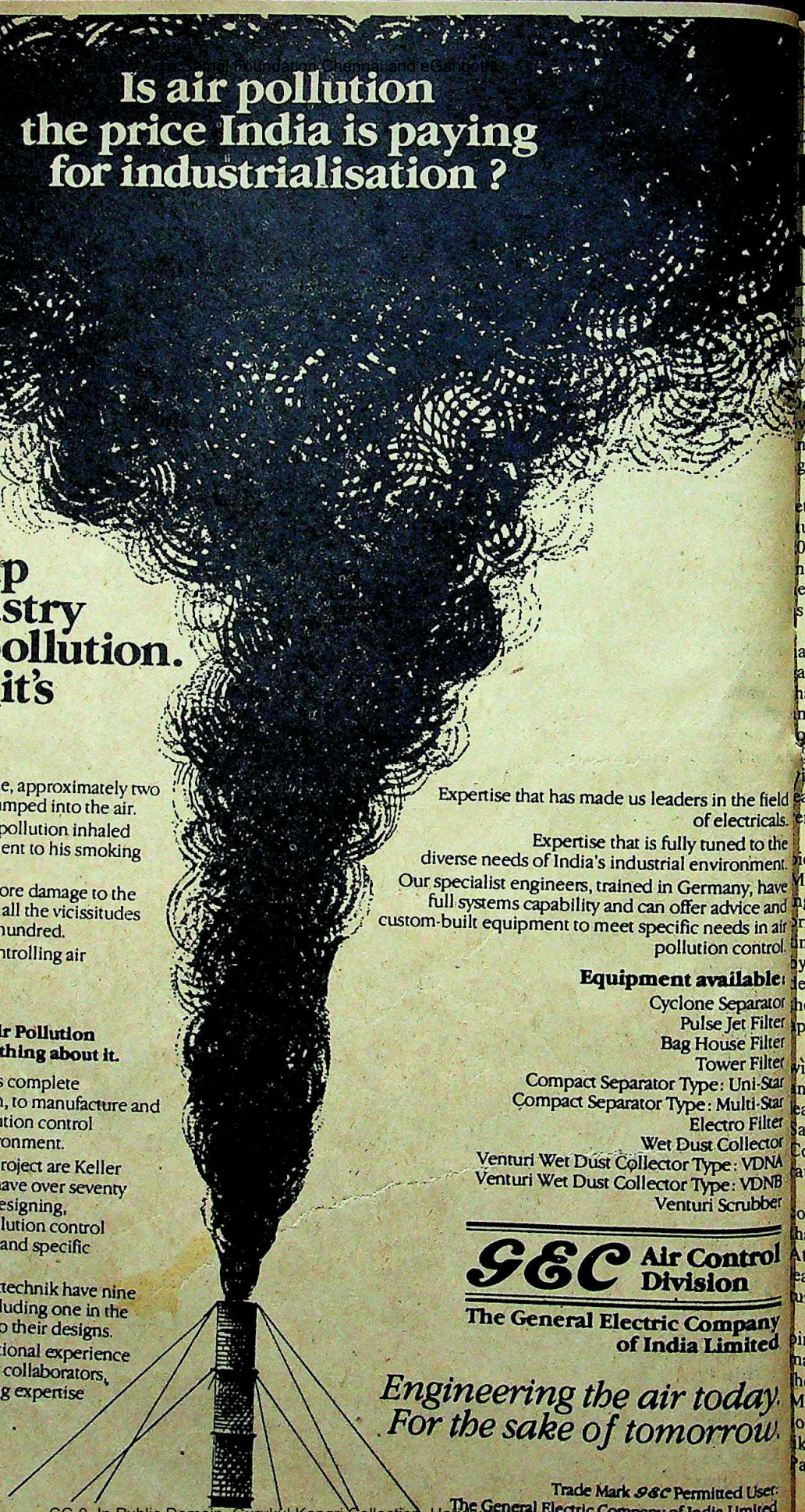
Is air pollution the price India is paying for industrialisation ?



GEC can help Indian industry control air pollution. Now. Before it's too late.

Every year, in our four metros alone, approximately two million tonnes of chemicals are pumped into the air.

In Calcutta, it is estimated that the pollution inhaled by a child in just one day is equivalent to his smoking twenty cigarettes.

In Agra, air pollution has caused more damage to the Taj Mahal in the last ten years, than all the vicissitudes of time did in the preceding three hundred.

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And it must be done now.

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Our technical collaborators in the project are Keller Lufttechnik of West Germany who have over seventy years of worldwide experience in designing, manufacturing and installing air pollution control systems and equipment for general and specific applications.

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OK DAL

Taken For A Ride

NO POINT of no return was so final as the one Charan Singh and Devi Lal reached on July 21. The crusty at leaders have clashed repeatedly over the ast two years and a half—only to be dragged ack into uneasy reconciliation every time y mediators. Incredibly, Charan Singh moed to hammer the last nail into the Lok al's coffin just as the nation was getting ver Bhajan Lal's brazen capture of power nd as Devi Lal was continuing his struggle gainst the "defector government".

The powder keg had been primed; what et it off was correspondent G.S. Chawla's unning report in the *Indian Express* on July 0 that Devi Lal had met Prime Minister ndira Gandhi secretly the previous day to egotiate entry into the Congress(I), as well s Haryana's deputy chief ministership.

Without asking for Devi Lal's explaation, Charan Singh suspended him and ave him four days to answer a charge-sheet hat listed many acts of "indiscipline". Chief mong these were the 'opposition unity onvention' that Devi Lal had organised in handigarh in April, his "bad behaviour" ith Governer G.D. Tapase and Congress(I) eader K.L. Poswal, and his anti-Tapase emarks in the Assembly on June 24.

Planted Story: Events developed ra-idly. After both Devi Lal and the Prime Minister's Secretariat denied that any meetng had taken place, the *Indian Express* rinted a contrite editorial on July 24 admitting in effect that the story had been planted y a Congress(I) functionary. Devi Lal, in a detailed reply to the charge-sheet, rejected all he accusations and demanded a public pology from Charan Singh.

Singh, however, did not back down; he withdrew only the "secret meeting" charge nd let the others stay. INDIA TODAY has learnt that Haryana Lok Dal President Dr Sarup Singh told Charan Singh that Congress(I) MP J.K. Jain had "corroborated" the secret meeting report.

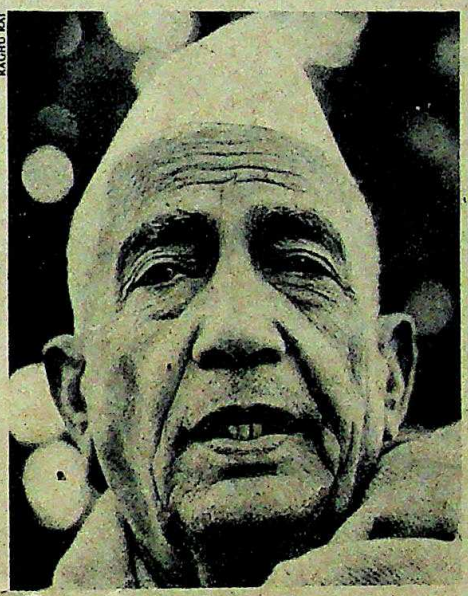
When asked about the *faux pas*, Chawla ockily says that he stands by his story, and hat Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) President Atal Behari Vajpayee told him that BJP eaders had known about Devi Lal's overtures to Mrs Gandhi a week earlier.

Almost unanimously, Lok Dal leaders pin the responsibility for the mess on one man—Satya Pal Malik, general secretary of he party and a Rajya Sabha member. Malik's hold over Charan Singh has grown o strong as to exclude powerful state bosses ike Bihar's Karpoori Thakur, Orissa's Biju Patnaik, Gujarat's Chimanbhai Patel, and Devi Lal. Sources say that his power actually flows from Charan Singh's family—wife Gayatri Devi, no mean intriguer herself, daughter Ved, and son-in-law Dr J.P. Singh.

Favours Done: Malik hails from Singh's home town Baghpat. A former student leader in Meerut, he suffered very brief detention during the Emergency and was reportedly bargaining with Congress leaders then for Charan Singh's entry into the party. Singh, however, rejected the overtures; in January 1977, he expelled Malik from the party for six years.

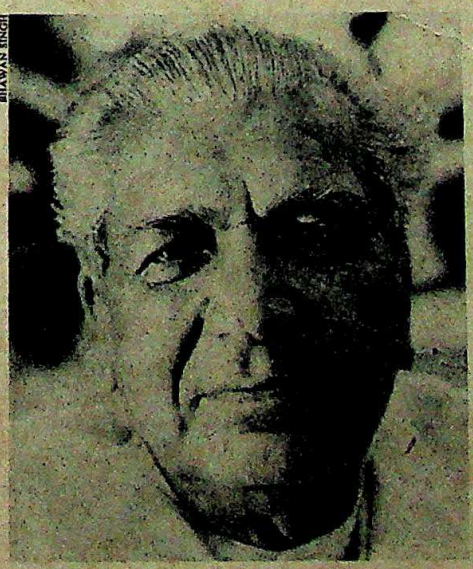
To everyone's surprise, Malik re-

RAGHU RAI



Charan Singh: hasty action

BHAWAN SINGH



Devi Lal: the final break

entered the party after the 1980 elections. Charan Singh's family apparently decided his links with Congress(I) leaders would come in useful for getting favours done. When Malik got Dr J.P. Singh's transfer from a Delhi hospital to Ranchi cancelled, he was rewarded with a Rajya Sabha ticket. As general secretary, he enjoys no support from the party rank and file. Also, charge rough-hewn party leaders, his life-style is too lavish for his visible sources of income.

Malik denies all these accusations, and in turn alleges that Devi Lal and his son Om Prakash have been sabotaging the party's chances in Haryana. Sources confirm, however, that it was Malik who drew up the charge-sheet against Devi Lal. Ominously, this time not a single Lok Dal leader has come forward to make peace between Singh and Lal. Says Malik: "Devi Lal's reply is no reply at all, it is total defiance. Party rules now provide only for expulsion."

That was exactly what Charan Singh did; on July 29, he expelled Devi Lal from the Lok Dal for six years. Immediately, party general secretaries Rabi Ray, Satyanarayana Reddy and Rameshwar Singh resigned from the party in protest, and Ray told newsmen that Madhu Limaye, then in Bombay, would follow suit. Always prone to believe the wildest rumours, Charan Singh this time had committed an irrevocable act of political *hara-kiri*. Fed up with his impulsive and damaging actions, leaders like Thakur, Patnaik, George Fernandes and Limaye decided to force a split.

Gloomy Prospects: Worse was in store for Devi Lal. The Haryana Privileges Committee was considering the very charges of 'misbehaviour' levelled against him by Charan Singh. Almost certainly, Bhajan Lal would flaunt the charge-sheet and get Devi Lal expelled from his assembly seat.

That step would truly spell the end of Lok Dal influence in Haryana. Already last week party insiders had calculated the effect of a split—of the 31 party MLA's in Haryana, they surmised, 15 would go with Devi Lal, 10 with Charan Singh, and six would defect to the Congress (I).

All these months, the Lok Dal leaders had swallowed Charan Singh's "insane tendencies", as one of them put it, only with the hope that the party would eventually coalesce and spearhead the Opposition's drive for power in 1985. Devi Lal's expulsion triggered serious efforts to forge a separate "left democratic force", possibly with Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna as the leader. "We were fools," said a party leader bitterly. "We wanted Charan Singh's vote although we did not want Charan Singh himself. Now he has become a terrible liability. We must cast the albatross off."

—CHAITANYA KALBAG

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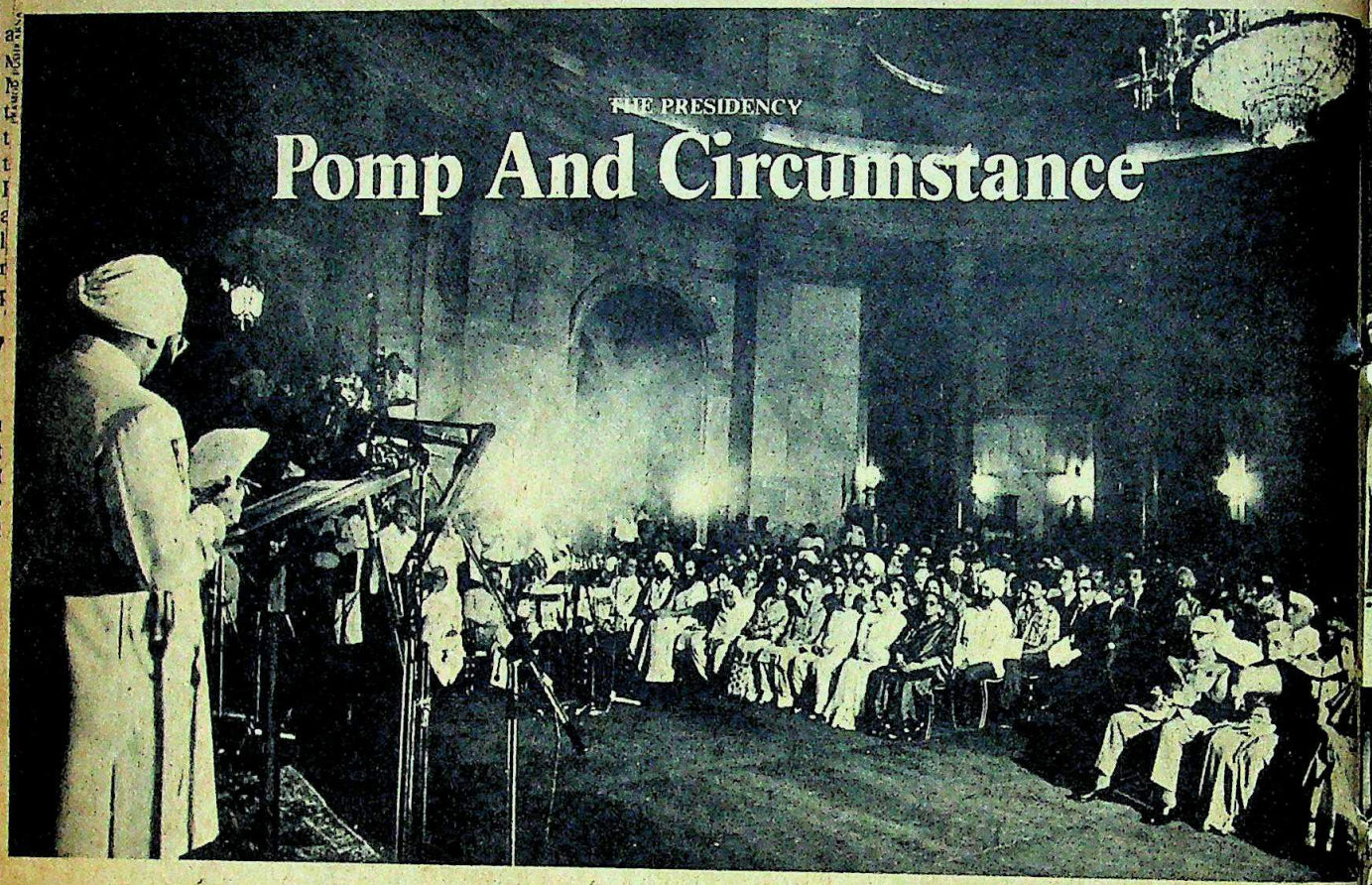
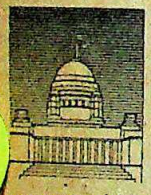
THE PRESIDENCY

Pomp And Circumstance





IF THE weather was any indication, Giani Zail Singh's five-year tenure as the seventh President of India promises to be a stormy one. The day of his swearing-in, Sunday, July 25, opened with a heavy downpour that continued till just before the official ceremony. The normally-immaculate forecourt of the Durbar Hall in Rashtrapati Bhavan, where the swearing-in was to take place, was a sea of red slush churned up by tyre tracks and hoofprints. But for all that, the Presidential mansion looked suitably imposing with the President's bodyguard in white uniforms with scarlet sashes, lined up in an arrowhead formation on the steps of the Durbar Hall.

Inside was minor bedlam as MP's jostled each other for the best seats in the house while Zail Singh's invitees, many obviously straight from the village, were hopping over the seats like it was a movie hall. Only 300 MP's could be accommodated in the comparatively cramped confines of the Durbar Hall and those present sported a privileged air. But even they were clearly outdone by Zail Singh's invitees and family members basking in reflected glory and wearing an air of festive gaiety. In comparison, the elegant diplomats were a subdued lot.

The setting for the ceremony was in keeping with the pomp and pageantry of the office—the huge central chandelier towering over the crowds and dominating the octagonal-shaped Durbar Hall. But the centrepiece of the solemn drama about to unfold were the two, gilt-edged red velvet chairs meant for the outgoing President, Neelam Sanjiva Reddy, and his successor, Giani Zail

BHAWAN SINGH

Reddy congratulates Zail Singh

The new President, Zail Singh, reads out address in the Durbar Hall

Singh. The chairs were placed on a rostr in front of a stone statue of the Budd Above the statue, a red velvet canopy st ched up to the vaulted ceiling. Behind chairs, stood five Presidential aides in ceremonial dress, while turbaned guar lined the walls on both sides. The solemn was enhanced considerably by the force and outspoken speech that Reddy had livered the day before in which he h spoken critically of the need to have a stro Opposition in the country, an obvious oblique warning to the ruling party.

Nervous Zail Singh: The ceremony its was conducted with split-second timi Exactly at 11.25 a.m., Mrs Gandhi busti into the Hall accompanied by Rajiv Gand and her ever-present aide, the safari-suit R.K. Dhawan. Rajiv, however, preferred sit at the rear of the Hall with his fellow MP At 11.30, precisely, to a flourish of trumpe Reddy and the President-elect arrived were escorted up the red-carpeted centre a by two Presidential aides-de-camp. The p cession was led by Speaker Balram Jakh and Vice-President Hidayatullah follow by Giani Zail Singh in a white *achkan* wi the Nehru-like red rose in the buttonho Behind him trailed Reddy, looking forlorn

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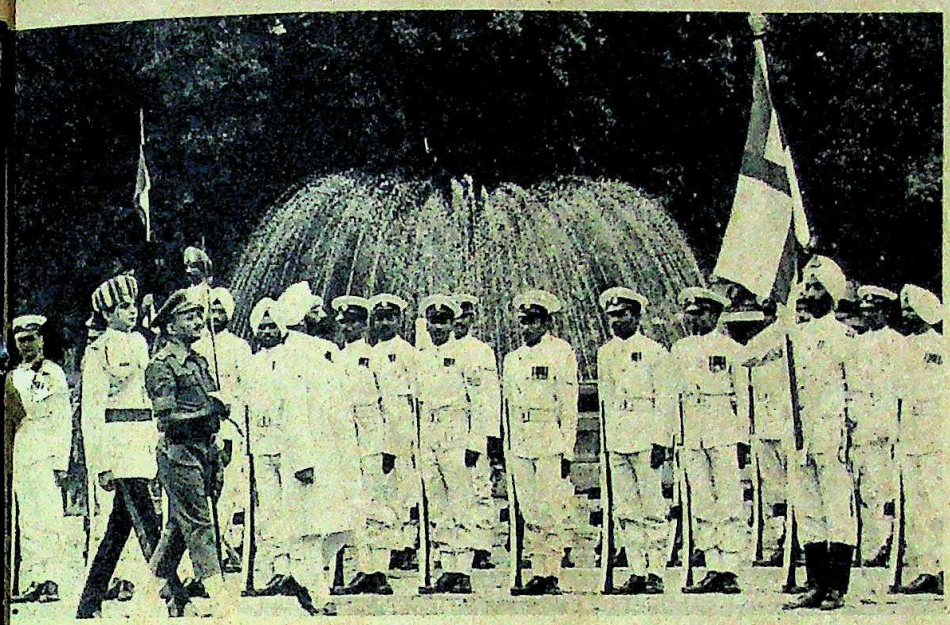
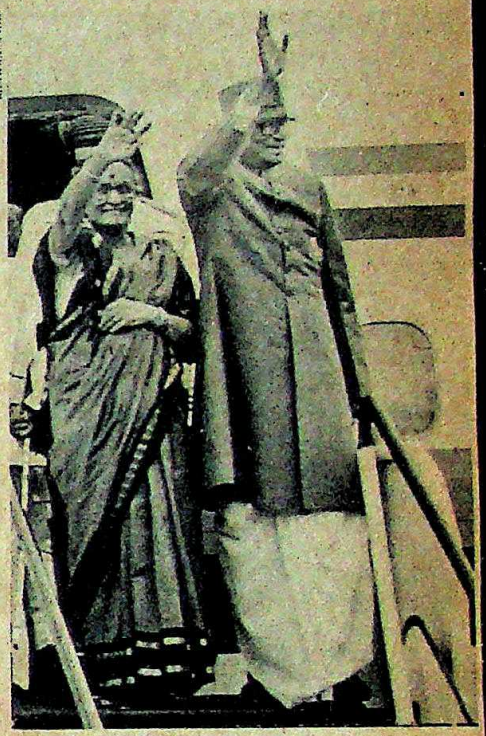
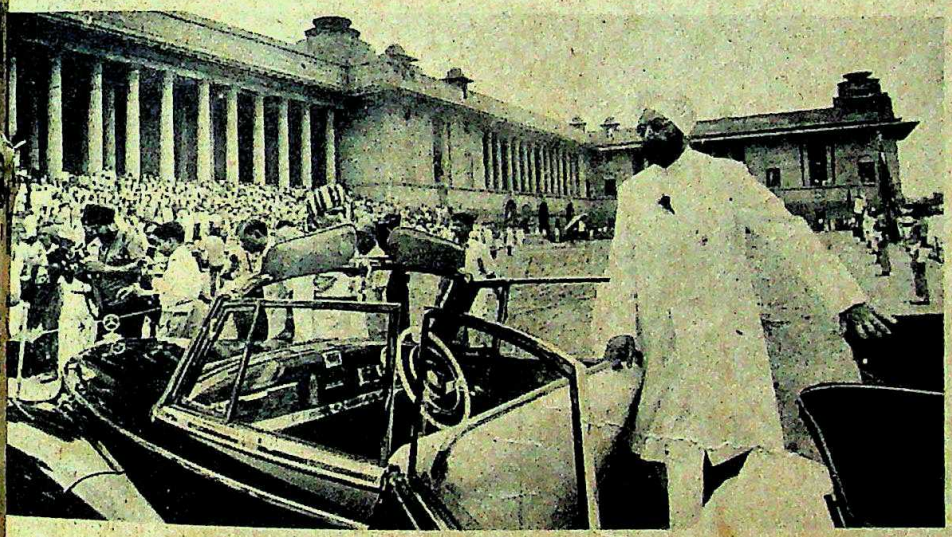


Zail Singh inspects the guard of honour after his swearing-in



Reddy and wife wave farewell



The President steps into his official Mercedes with his new residence in the background

the final moments of his Presidency. In contrast to Giani's spotless white, Reddy sported a muddy brown *achkan*.

Whether it was the occasion or the thought of what lay ahead, Zail Singh looked decidedly nervous. Once the strains of the national anthem had faded away, he sat ramrod-straight in his seat, his hands stiff in his lap while Reddy preferred his familiar pose, slouched down in the high-backed Presidential chair, his hands resting on the armrests. Zail Singh's nervousness was, however, more evident in the oath-taking ceremony which he made in unaccustomed and Punjabi-flavoured English. He stumbled twice over the oath and on one occasion, Chief Justice Y.V. Chandrachud had to repeat himself before Zail moved hesitantly along. With the oath-taking over, Giani switched places with Reddy on the rostrum with an air of obvious relief, while outside, the traditional 21 guns boomed out a muffled salute.

Colourless Speech: There was an air of hushed expectancy as the newly-appointed President stepped up to the rostrum to deliver his Presidential address. A lot of effort had evidently gone into its composing and it had been sent to the Cabinet for the requisite approval at 11 p.m. the previous night. Enclosed in a blue folder and written in Gurmukhi, the address was delivered in Hindi, a language Zail was far more comfortable with. Even so, it was hesitantly delivered.

The speech struck a jarring note when he proclaimed that "the nation has gained momentum, particularly in the preceding two and a half years"—the period since Mrs Gandhi returned to power. It was a sentence that was clearly out of context and only served to reduce the solemnity of the last obligatory sentence, that he would discharge his duties without "fear or favour".

By midday, the ceremony was over and the invitees trooped outside to await Zail Singh's ceremonial arrival in the forecourt in the first of his Presidential perks—the gleaming carriage drawn by six carefully-groomed and plumed horses. A smiling Mrs Gandhi was forced to hitch up her pink and white printed sari and step daintily through the slush to get to the saluting base where she and Hidayatullah would greet the new President. Looking tiny and bird-like compared to the towering figures of the Presidential aides, she awaited the carriage which drew up in a flurry of shouted commands.

The new President, for the first time in his life, preceded Mrs Gandhi to the saluting base where he stood in solitary but uncomfortable splendour before marching off to inspect the guard of honour. A few limp salutes later, it was all over and Zail Singh climbed into the second of his Presidential perks—a gleaming, open-roofed Mercedes, to be driven to the study of Rashtrapati Bhavan, his new home for the next five years. But as he left, there was no mistaking the wistful look on his bearded face, not so much for what lay ahead, but what he was leaving behind.

—DILIP BOBB

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INDIA-PAKISTAN

A Belated Homecoming

THE ADVISABILITY of never looking a gift horse in the mouth has never really applied to India and Pakistan, mainly owing to the schizophrenic relations between the two countries. Consequently, the reaction to Pakistan's "humanitarian" gesture last fortnight in returning a handful of Indian prisoners was painfully predictable, and, like almost every event concerning the two countries, rapidly degenerated into a familiar farce.

Admittedly, the media build-up to the release of the ten prisoners—held in Pakistan's Sukkar jail since 1974—played a major role in the acrimonious exchanges that took place in the wake of the release. In fact, till the ragged bunch of prisoners actually landed in New Delhi, many people were under the mistaken impression that they were prisoners of war. The reality came as a rude shock.

The ten prisoners stumbled down the ramp of the Indian Airlines aircraft that had brought them from Karachi in a catatonic daze. Nervously clutching their meagre possessions and darting fearful glances at the throng of policemen and media representatives awaiting their arrival, they resembled escapees from some lunatic asylum. That, unfortunately, was closer to the truth as was soon evident. Six of the ten prisoners were in an advanced state of insanity. The solitary female member, Mrs Badami alternated between hysterical laughter and gibbering incoherence. The remainder just stared vacantly at the popping flashbulbs.

Bad Treatment: The ten unfortunates were all villagers who had strayed across the Rajasthan border or, as in the case of the three Keralites in the group, had drifted across to Pakistan in the hope of finding their way eventually to the Gulf. The only member of the bedraggled group who could speak with any coherence was Muhammad Chembakeshari from Kerala who alleged that the treatment meted out to them was inhuman. "We were beaten up and made to do hard labour for long hours at a stretch. We were also not permitted to write any letters".

Predictably, the state of the prisoners was the signal for yet another round of verbal crossfire between the two countries. The Pakistan Government, according to Foreign Ministry sources, had tried to present the Indians with a *fait accompli*. The idea was to play up their "humanitarian gesture" in releasing the prisoners and at the same time get rid of ten prisoners who were mentally unstable and quite obviously, anything but spies. The ploy, as it turned out, boomeranged disastrously.

The storm that broke in the front pages of the dailies the next day was clearly, in some cases, an overreaction. But nonetheless the force of the printed attack must surely have reached all the way to Islamabad. Pakistan's New Delhi embassy hardly helped matters by issuing a press release on the day of the release which harped on the "humanitarian problem".

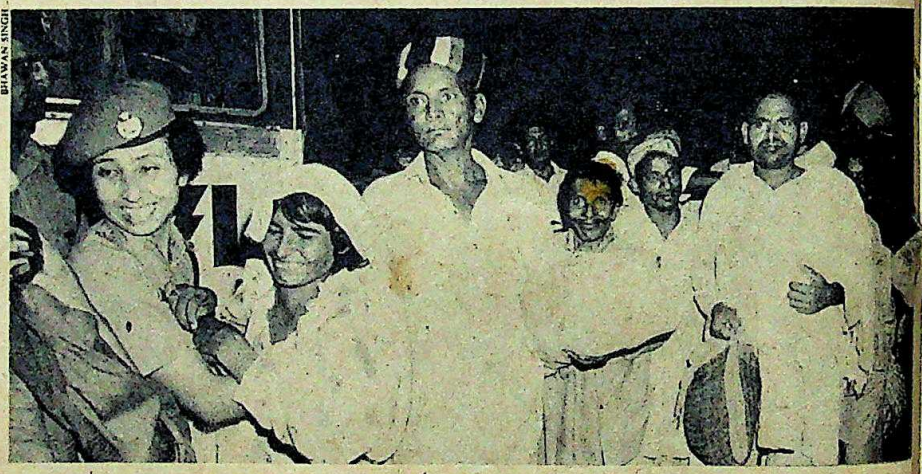
But the edit writers were clearly ignoring the wood for the trees. For one, there are, according to a statement by the Home Minister made last February, a total of 249 Pakistani citizens languishing in Indian jails, many of them have been there as long if not longer than their Indian counterparts released last fortnight. For another, it is more than likely that quite a few of them are in the same mental and physical state.

Mutual Distrust: Another fact that was conveniently glossed over was that Pakistan had offered to repatriate the prisoners as part of a larger 13-member group in mid-1977. The delay in their release was a direct result of the mutual paranoia that exists between the two countries. The Indian Government, according to official sources, had naturally taken a jaundiced view of the offer and insisted on first examining the antecedents of the prisoners and confirming their Indian nationality before agreeing to the proposal.

Their main fear, and justifiably so, was that the Pakistanis would try and sneak in a few spies among the repatriates who would then have a legal right to be in the country. Moreover, trying to confirm the identities of the prisoners required understandable delays since the Indian Government first demanded more details about them from the Pakistan Government which took its own time in arriving. Following that, the effort to trace the prisoners and find their relatives took even longer.

It is clear, however, that all the unnecessary acrimony could have been avoided if the Pakistan Government had allowed India's consular representatives to meet the prisoners in jail and establish their bona fides. This was refused and the Pakistan Government has only now agreed to permit them access to Indian prisoners. "If the Pakistan Government is in such a humanitarian mood, they could easily have agreed to this earlier instead of waiting till the prisoners were released and then announcing the agreement," says a Foreign Ministry source.

Political Consequences: It is apparent that both sides are equally to blame for the



BHAWAN SINGH

The prisoners arriving at Palam airport: catatonic daze

mountain being made of the ten moles. It is being conveniently forgotten here that the plight of the prisoners jailed without trial was first revealed by the Pakistani press last February from where it was also picked up by Amnesty International. Subsequently the Indian Government lodged a strong protest with the Pakistan foreign office leading to the eventual release. But that still leaves almost 300 more Indian citizens in Pakistan jails and a slightly lesser number of Pakistani prisoners on this side of the border.

Obviously, with the hysteria generated over last fortnight's event, subsequent exchanges of prisoners will prove another cat and mouse game and the Pakistani media will be waiting to return the compliment when the repatriation of Pakistani prisoners takes place shortly. The real tragedy, of course, is the undeniable fact that last fortnight's event has made good neighbourly relations between the two countries more elusive than ever before.

—DILIP BOS

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ITDC

Battle Of The Brass

WITH most government-owned corporations floundering in the red, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the red symbolises much more than bottom lines in balance sheets. All too often it would appear to bear more resemblance to the blood spilled in factional infighting and political interference from the tree-lined avenues that house the country's cabinet club. One prime culprit is the India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC), the mammoth multi-crore organisation that seems to construct more problems for itself than it does hotels.

Last fortnight, after a temporary ceasefire, the warring factions in the ITDC resumed their guerilla war which owes its origins to the appointment of S.K. Mishra, an IAS official from Haryana, as chairman in August 1980. Mishra's elevation was in the teeth of strong opposition from Tourism Minister A.P. Sharma and he has since been subjected to a hostile reception from Sharma's protégés in the corporation. The result has been an undercurrent of tension in the top echelons of the ITDC with the issue currently at stake being Mishra's second extension due to come up for decision in the middle of this month.

Charges: The latest shot in a long running battle was fired by Mishra when he asked the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to look into some recent financial deals concerning hotel division headed by J.P. Sharma, general manager (hotels), who is Mishra's main rival. Top of the list is a Rs 2 crore contract for the supply of eatables for Asiad kitchens and ITDC hotels, the tenders for which, some contractors have complained in writing, were manipulated. The CBI has also been asked to examine an order placed on a foreign company for the import by air freight of Rs 1 crore worth of kitchen equipment for ITDC's new hotels and Asiad kitchens. Another complaint relates to the interception last June of a dining set made by the ITDC's furniture workshop allegedly on its way to a senior official's private home.

The first salvo was fired in early June by the anti-Mishra faction when over 50 employees allied to the Congress(I)-controlled All India ITDC Workers' Union and led by a local Congress(I) leader gheraoed Mishra for over five hours in his New Delhi office ostensibly over a charter of demands which included the appointment of some senior officials. This was followed up with a three-page memorandum to the corporation's board of directors containing serious allegations against Mishra. The memorandum states that: "Since the take-over of the post of chairman, Shri S.K. Mishra has created all-round chaotic conditions in the corporation. The entire working force and officers are totally demoralised on account of his style of functioning and the fear complex created by him."

Mishra (left), A.P. Sharma and J.P. Sharma: feuding

A counter letter sent by Mishra supporters to the prime minister spells out another story and accuse minister Sharma's protégé, J.P. Sharma of trying to topple Mishra and seize the chairmanship. "Since J.P. Sharma could not achieve his cherished goal," says the letter, "he started concealed attempts to torpedo the policies and programmes the chairman wanted to implement, formed a clique in the corporation with its links at the ministerial level and virtually started a parallel administration, taking the progress of the corporation into reverse gear."

Bad Relations: Such rivalry apart, the ITDC has not been helped much by constant ministerial interference in its functioning. Last year, the CBI recommended action against employees working in the organisation's duty free shops between 1974 and 1980. One official, the CBI said, had "amassed assets disproportionate to his known source of income through corrupt and dubious means". Mishra ordered the suspension of the concerned official; the ministry reinstated him. Two other officials indicted in the same CBI report were actually promoted without Mishra's approval.

The Parliament's Committee on Public Undertakings, in its 48th report presented three months ago, was obliged to say, "The committee regrets that relations between the ITDC and the administrative ministry are not as cordial as they should be. There has been an erosion of the administrative autonomy of ITDC."

In spite of this, the corporation has improved its performance in the two years that Mishra has been in charge. The corporation's pre-tax profits jumped by over 60 per cent from Rs 198.61 lakh in 1980–81 to Rs 325 lakh in 1981–82. The trend has continued in the first quarter of 1980 with its operating profits up by 54 per cent from the corresponding period in the previous year.

But there are some debit factors which Mishra's detractors will gleefully point to. The Comptroller and Auditor-General (C&AG) of India has pulled up the corporation in its latest report for a decline in its share of international tourist traffic, over purchase of consumption items, absence of a proper industrial and purchase policy and excessive breakage of crockery and cutlery. The report concludes that: "No precise policy for procurement of goods and for fixing of the selling price has been laid down." The C&AG discovered that the ITDC's stock-holding position represented between 44 and 67 per cent of its working capital.

Declining Performance: However, not all the blame can be laid at Mishra's doormat. The percentage of tourists staying at ITDC hotels has been on the decline from 1974 and slumped to 25.29 per cent during 1979–80 from its 1974 figure of 30.89 per cent, while its total share in the hotel industry over the same period dropped from 17.7 per cent to a discreditable 8.1 per cent.

Taken as a whole, the average occupancy rate of the corporation's 21 hotels dropped from 60.95 per cent in 1978–79 to 57.04 per cent in 1981–82. Similarly, in 1978–79 nine out of 20 hotels were running at a loss.

Mishra, according to sources, will accept an extension only if he is guaranteed autonomy. In the meantime, among replacements being considered are former chairman K.T. Satarawala, Rajen Jaitley, marketing controller of ITC's hotel division, Surinder Gadokhe, former ITC senior vice-president for hotels and B. Ramadurai, former managing director of Handicrafts and Handlooms Export Corporation.

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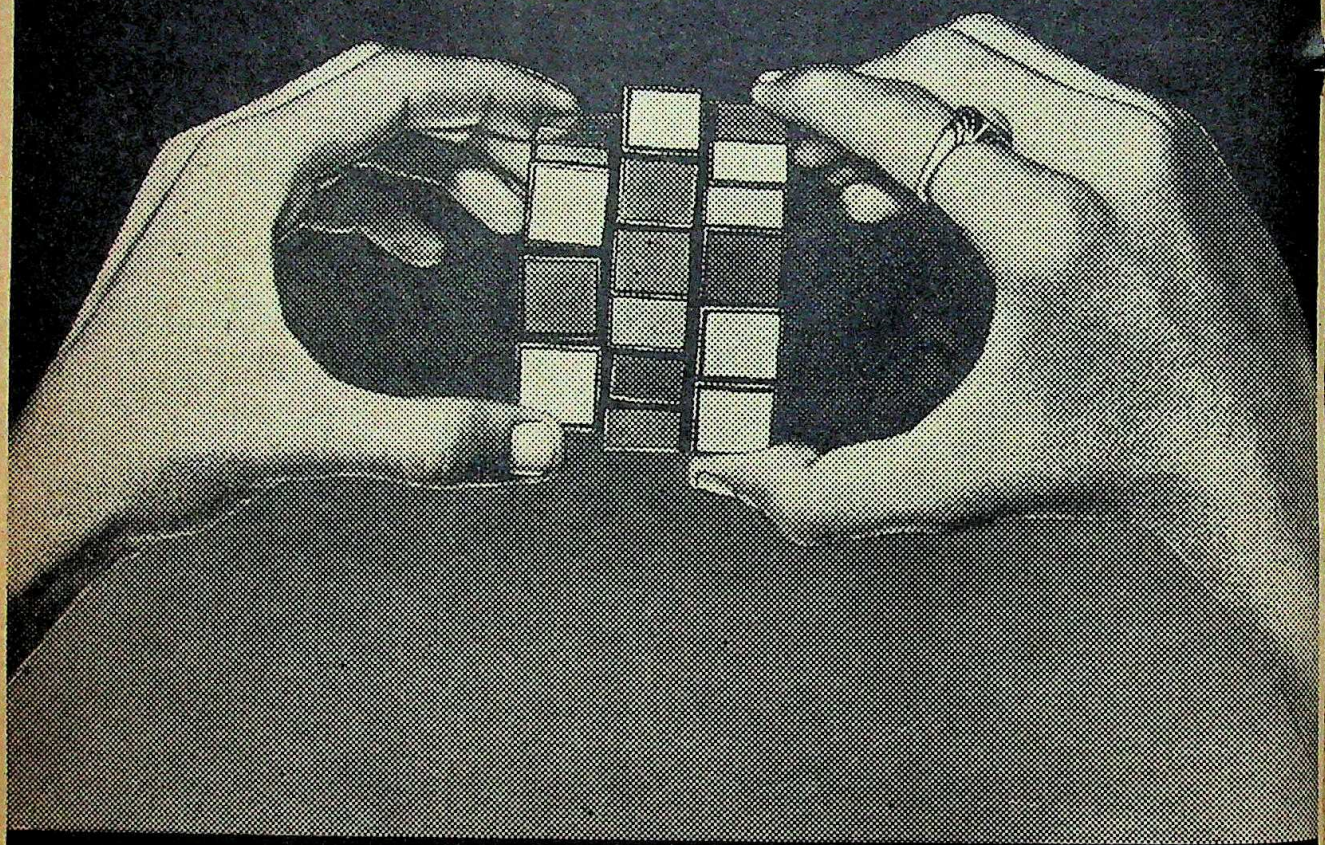

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RAJASTHAN/REFUGEES

Tragedy Of Errors

ABDUL Khuddus, 40, and his wife and five children sit in a grimy and dilapidated building at Dholpur in Rajasthan pondering their future. A few weeks ago, he was a labourer in Ajmer. Last month, he was grabbed and accused of being a Bangladesh refugee by intelligence men who threatened to have him deported.

Khuddus pleaded that he was an Indian citizen but the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) officials turned a deaf ear. Along with 25 others, he was packed off to Dholpur where Bangladesh refugees caught while making their way across India to Pakistan are lodged. Said an exasperated Khuddus: "I told the CID men that I would produce documents to show that I am an Indian but they threatened to beat me up if I spoke. What will I do in Bangladesh? It is an alien country for us."

Khuddus is not the only Indian Muslim in the building threatened with deportation. According to the inmates, in the last few weeks over 25 persons have been apprehended by CID officials in Ajmer where they had come from various parts of India to offer prayers at the famous mosque.

Ordeal: One of them is Ghulam Rasool, 72; he says he is from Dumurpada in West Bengal's Hooghly district. Shortly after he arrived in Ajmer, CID officials surrounded him outside the dargah and asked him why he was fleeing from Bangladesh. A nervous Rasool pleaded with folded hands that he was an Indian from West Bengal but the officials packed him off to Dholpur. Tearfully, the wrinkled and grey-bearded Rasool asked: "How can I live in a country which is not mine?"

Allahuddin Gulabsheikh, 50, a farmer from Sholapur was another who was arrested but he refused to take the CID's allegations lying down. He has protested to the local police in writing and has been assured that he would be released as soon as the formalities were completed. Mohammed Nassemuddin, 43, a resident of Katiyar town in Bihar is also likely to be released. He had come to Ajmer to sell stone jewellery and to visit the dargah. As soon as he was arrested he sent a letter to his brother who dashed to Dholpur to convince the police that Nassemuddin was an Indian national. The police have agreed to release him but have asked him to stay at Dholpur for a short while to "keep a watch on the others". Announced Nassemuddin proudly: "I have been appointed as a guard by the police to ensure that none of the refugees run away."

Refugees from Bangladesh in Dholpur (above) and Indian Muslims in wrongful confinement: grim future

The difficulty for the police is to tell between the Bangladeshi Muslims and Indian Muslims and mistakes are made all too often. In the recent past large numbers of Bihari Muslims have been trying to make the long trek across India from Bangladesh to Pakistan. They are an unfortunate minority, unwanted by all three countries. The Pakistani Army sends them back to India if they are caught. The Indian police are stuck with the unpleasant task of catching these stateless citizens and sending them back to Bangladesh. Inevitably, it is practically impossible to tell Bihari Muslims and other Indian Muslims, who either live in the region or have gone to Ajmer on pilgrimage.

Yet, the Dholpur centre houses many Bangladeshis who are to be deported. Liaqut Ali, 25, a Bihari Muslim is one of the unfortunate ones who tried to cross from Bangladesh to Pakistan. He used to work in a flour mill in Dacca but after the liberation, circumstances changed drastically. Unable to speak Bengali he was repeatedly abused by Bangladeshis and was thrown out of his house one morning.

False Lures: The International Red Cross sheltered and fed Ali till a few months ago when he, along with 25 other Bihari Muslims, was lured by a Pakistani national called Mumtaz who promised to take them to Pakistan for a fee ranging from Rs 50 to Rs 200. Mumtaz took them till Ganganagar in west Rajasthan, on the border of Pakistan, and suddenly disappeared. The police caught them on Ganganagar railway station and having established that they were Bangladesh nationals, sent them to Dholpur from where their return to Bangladesh would be organised.

Each one has a pathetic story to tell. Most of them said that they did not want to go back because of the rising animosity against non-Bengali Muslims. Reduced to a position where no one wants them, they now exist on the Government's dole of Rs 2 a day which does not ensure them even one square meal. The children who crawl on the dirty floor are underfed; their ribs stick out as a grim reminder. The women desperately try to hide their nakedness with torn pieces of cloth.

Harassment: Also, among the refugees caught by the police in Rajasthan are Burmese Muslims who are fleeing their country because of harassment. Maulana Abdussalam, 22, left Burma four years ago after communal riots took place in the Arakan region. He went to Bangladesh for a few months and then to Deobund in west Uttar Pradesh. Thinking that he could live with dignity in Pakistan, Abdussalam set out and was caught on the Rajasthan border and sent to Dholpur. Said he: "I am not wanted in any country. Now, I have realised that the best place for a Muslim to stay is India. I was

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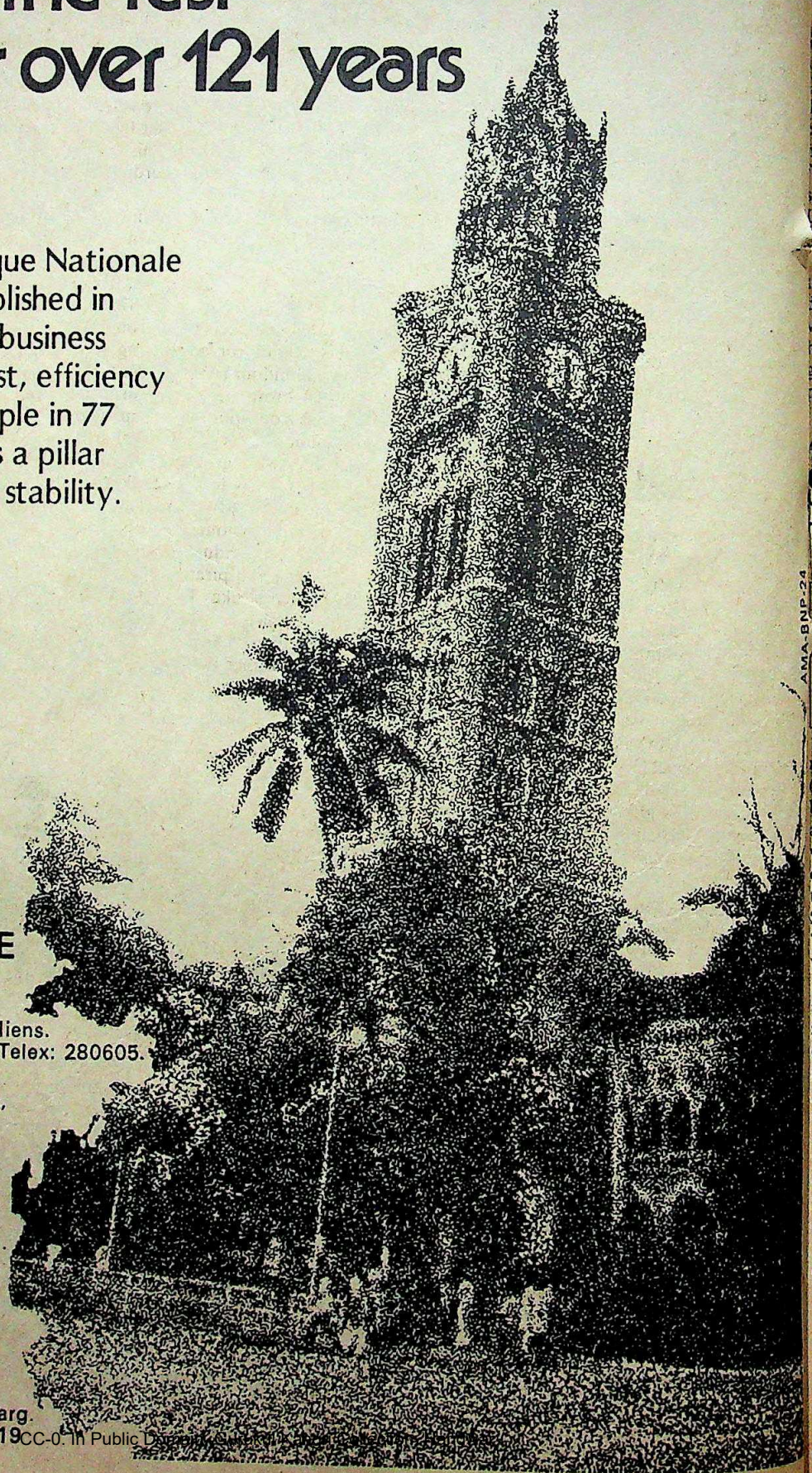

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ot harassed at all here. But, India also does ot want me."

When INDIA TODAY asked Pardyuman ingh, Rajasthan's minister of state for home hout the Indians mistakenly held at holpur, he categorically said that such a hing could not happen. However, Singh later onfirmed that one such case had come to his otice and the wronged person would be eed soon. Both R.D. Gupta, the state's pecial inspector general of police (IGP), and D.K. Datta, additional IGP, said that they new nothing of such a happening.

Wiping her tears with the *pallav* of her orn saree, Golezan Biwi, 55, of Mednipur istrict of West Bengal said in a quivering oice: "Please tell the *saabs* to let us go back ome. We are not criminals. What is now oing to be our future?" The question robably has a very painful answer.

—RAMESH MENON in Dholpur

ASIAD

Short-selling The Games

AFTER all the doubts, it seems that the November Asiad, now less than four months away, finally means business. Last fortnight, however, it turned out that that was precisely what it didn't mean: at the weekly meeting of the Special Organising Committee (SOC) of the Asiad, official estimates placed before the members gloomily indicated that advertising and franchise revenue from the winter jamboree was falling much short of expectations with only Rs 12 crore of the expected Rs 34 crore collected so far. Said a member of the SOC secretariat: "The selling of Appu is ending up the wrong way."

The Asiad is being touted to advertisers and franchise seekers by three set-ups. The SOC itself has already decided on various soft drink and food suppliers. It has entrusted the job of selling advertising space in the arenas to MEETCO, a Dubai-based company, which is working in India through A.K. Advertising of Bombay, whose chairman is film actor Sanjay Khan. Prahlad Bajaj and Company, also of Bombay, has been asked by the SOC to sell the right to carry the Asiad logo and mascot on commercial products. While Prahlad Bajaj has made no monetary commitment, MEETCO has to pay the SOC a minimum of Rs 5 crore.

But things have not worked out quite the way the organisers would have liked them to. Neither MEETCO nor Prahlad Bajaj is willing to talk figures, but unofficial sources say that MEETCO, for its part, has sold only a tenth of the space available in the stadia. Prahlad Bajaj too has not made much headway and is grumbling about the direct deals that the SOC has made with various suppliers. As for the SOC itself, its Director of Coordination, Arun K. Gupta, also refuses to talk figures; only a few weeks earlier he had told INDIA TODAY that Rs 17.5 crore had already been collected. This boastful statement, as the SOC's own records show, is far from the truth.

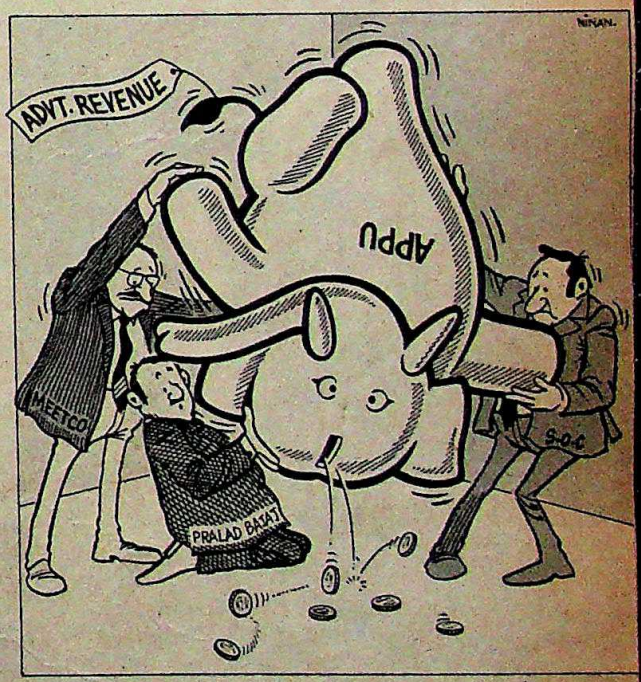
Little Interest: An analysis of the Rs 12 crore already collected tells its own story. The revenue from franchising the logo, mascot and gift items—beverages, foodstuffs—comes to slightly over Rs 87 lakh. Messages printed on tickets have brought in Rs 26.5 lakh. Rights for advertising, television rights and indoor advertisements add up to Rs 9.64 crore, including MEETCO's share. Royalties from sports goods made by foreign and Indian firms put in another Rs 1 crore. Donors who gave money in the interest of sports threw in Rs 32 lakh. It is clear that the logo and the mascot have brought in a meagre amount; worse, private individuals have already begun to pirate Appu on souvenirs like T-shirts and key-chains.

When the selling of Appu began, the future seemed rosy. Called 'The Most Unique Advertising Opportunity This Year', a booklet pointed out that at least 20 lakh people would watch the Games, not to mention television audiences at home and abroad. They offered a series of 18 major packages at a price of Rs 15 lakh for five prime ground sites, as well as 40 other opportunities—including balloons at Rs 5 lakh each that would float above the stadia. According to Timuchin Hasan, general manager of A.K. Advertising, it was thought that with the total advertising expenditure by private and public sector companies being Rs 196.24 crore in 1980-81, it would not be too difficult to raise Rs 3 crore, with more from overseas advertisers.

As things stand, the expectations have been belied. MEETCO, said an SOC official, has so far deposited Rs 3.8 crore, "but now they seem to be hedging on the remaining Rs 1.2 crore". MEETCO is unlikely to back out, but it is finding it rough going. Prahlad Bajaj is dogged by the fact that different business houses are paying different prices for the franchise, and this has greatly upset advertisers. Pure Drinks, makers of Campa-Cola, paid Rs 3.5 lakh, AMPRO biscuits Rs 2.2 lakh and Victor T-shirts Rs 3 lakh.

The ice cream struggle had the relatively unknown Bingo brand in the lead, with the promoters asking for Rs 4.5 lakh. Another reason for the low sales is the textile strike which has crippled the otherwise high-spending industry. S. Chatterji of Prahlad Bajaj is quite honest: "We have tried hard to promote sales but the response is poor."

Scanty Exposure: The fault lies not so much with MEETCO and Prahlad Bajaj as with the Asian Games organisers. There is simply not enough exposure of the Asiad on a national basis. Appu should have been on first-name terms with the country by now—just as Misha, the Moscow Olympics mascot was in 1980—but very few people have heard of the cheerful elephant outside the capital. Said an SOC member: "There should have been an Asiad fever in the capital. But everyone just seems to be happy because the flyovers have opened. Outside Delhi, no one seems to be aware of the big event in November."



No wonder that unhappiness is the common denominator among the sponsors and promoters of the big event in November. The SOC puts the blame squarely on MEETCO and Prahlad Bajaj for not achieving the targets, although no one is willing to disclose the target. The truth is simple: the SOC had hoped that the promoters would sell space, the logo and the mascot and sell the Games in the bargain—a job they themselves should have done. It turned out to be a bad bargain.

—ASOKA RAINA

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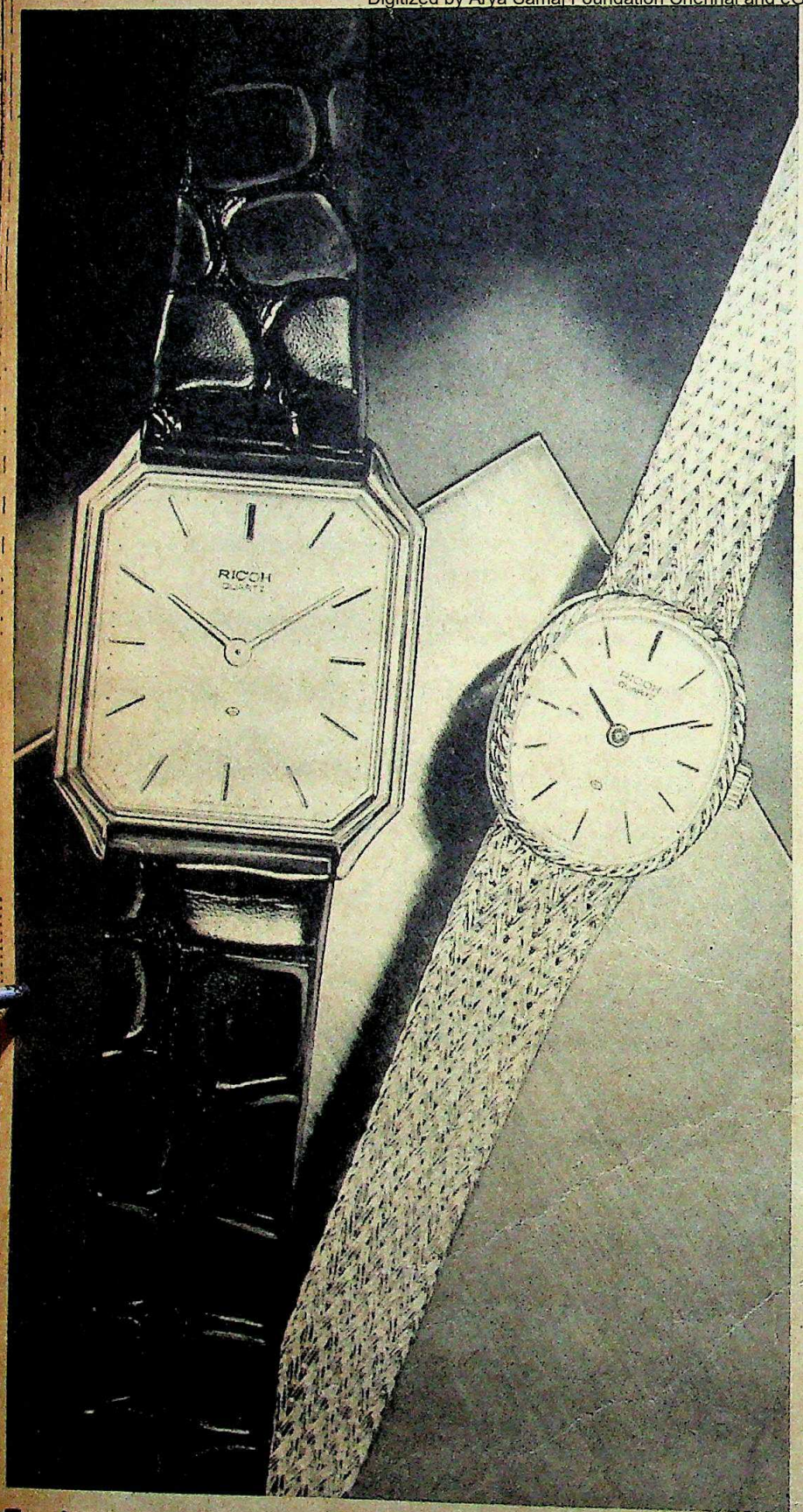

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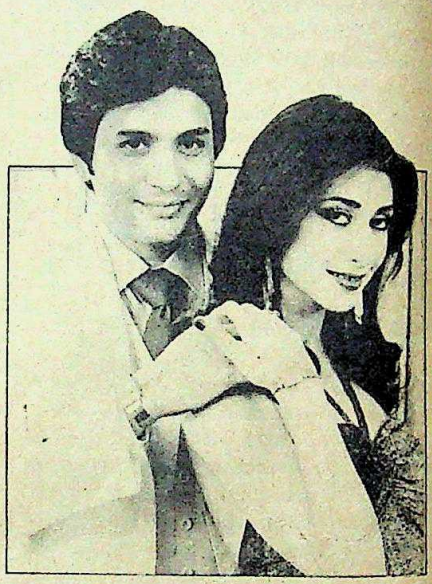

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UTTAR PRADESH

Advantage Brahmin

THE SWEARING in of unassuming 58-year-old Sripat Mishra as the 13th chief minister of Uttar Pradesh at Lucknow's ornate Raj Bhavan last fortnight, though no different from other ceremonies of its kind, was a landmark of sorts. It brought a decisive end to the late Sanjay Gandhi's efforts to break the vice-like Brahmin grip over the state. Mishra, a dark horse in the hectic scramble for the job was the seventh Brahmin out of the nine Congress(I) chief ministers the state has had—the only exceptions were Chandra Bhan Gupta and Vishwanath Pratap Singh, whose resignation paved the way for Mishra's induction. Significantly, all the four non-Congress(I) chief ministers were non-Brahmins.

The drama preceding Mishra's final nomination was reminiscent of similar scenes in June 1980. Then, the Brahmin-Thakur tussle for the job ended when Sanjay threw his decisive weight behind the Thakurs and V.P. Singh. But this time the tables were turned on the Thakurs. V.P. Singh's failure to carry the Brahmin dominated bureaucracy and party had made it obvious that the only way to curb dissidence and the Thakur lobby was to have a Brahmin in charge. Mrs Gandhi was aware that while Sanjay had weeded out large numbers of Brahmins from the legislature party by denying them assembly tickets, he had died before he could demolish the Brahmin grip over the district level party structure.

Mrs Gandhi set the stage for the change by unceremoniously sacking Bishamber Nath Pandey, the octogenarian Brahmin president of the Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee-I (UPCC-I) and bringing in Mohsina Kidwai in his place. Then the Central leadership allowed the name of Narain Dutt Tiwari, Union industry minister, to be floated as the principal contender for the post, ignoring the claims of Veer Bahadur Singh, the leader of the 110-strong Thakur lobby in the legislature party. Candidates from other communities were given short shrift on the grounds that nobody commanded the following of a majority of legislators—though this argument would have applied equally to Mishra.

While Congress(I) legislators were taken aback by Mishra's selection, many political observers felt it was in keeping with

Mishra's swearing-in: de-Sanjayfication

Mrs Gandhi's practice of choosing as chief minister a 'nobody' who will not be able to challenge her in any way. That this was the overriding consideration was clear from the fact that Mishra, who hopped from the Bharatiya Kranti Dal to the Congress in 1971 can hardly be termed a hard core loyalist—Mrs Gandhi's other yardstick when she chooses her men. Says Madhav Prashad Tripathi, state president of the Bharatiya Janata Party: "The state will be run from New Delhi as usual." Mishra denies this. "I am a free person," he says.

No Options: But for all the chief minister's protestations it is a fact that both Arun Nehru and Rajiv Gandhi played an important role in the final choice of ministers. Nehru was in Lucknow for two days and all the prospective ministers made the trek to his guest-house before they were finally sworn in. Admits an office-bearer of the UPCC(I): "Mishra was given a list of MLA's to be made ministers. He only forwarded it to the governor after putting his signature."

The choice of ministers also indicated that Mishra had not been allowed many options. He not only retained five ministers from V.P. Singh's Cabinet against whom serious corruption and administrative charges were pending but also inducted two ministers—Abdul Rahman Nashtar and Yashpal Singh—who were dropped by Singh following widespread complaints against them. In addition, Swarup Kumari Bakshi, who performed dismally with the home and education portfolios was taken back because of her relationship with Mrs Gandhi. His only nominee in the cabinet is Baldev Singh Arya. Said Mukhtiar Anees of the Democratic Socialist Party: "Leave alone dropping the shadier lot even those who had been dismissed on charges of corruption are back in power." Mishra defends his choices, saying: "I have verified the facts to my satisfaction before inducting them." In fact, Mishra himself has the handicap of charges of corruption relating to his short stint as a civil servant and in the Charan Singh ministry.

And while people of questionable loyalty and integrity have been able to climb onto the bandwagon others with clean records were inexplicably dropped: for example, Jagdish Chander Dixit, former labour minister, and Niaz Hasan, the former industry minister. Two other junior ministers, Zafar Ali Naqvi and Nirmal Khatri have also been shunted out though there are no charges against them.

Shake-up: Mishra was only allowed to display his independence in his choice of officials. He moved rapidly to juggle police portfolios replacing Naresh Kumar, the state's urbane police chief with Suresh Chandra Dixit. In addition, he appointed R.D. Pandey as inspector general (Intelligence). This converted the top layer of the Home Department, of which Mishra has retained charge, into a Brahmin stronghold. Mishra also appointed another Brahmin, Sant Kumar Tripathi as the chairman of the Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation. Says a senior secretary to the state Government: "Whether you like it or not, no leader can survive in Uttar Pradesh unless he keeps the Brahmins in good humour."

—PRABHU CHAWLA with ANAND SAGAR in Lucknow

PUNJAB

Temporary Lull

ROLLING out the red carpet for a powerful erstwhile political foe can be painful business. But for Punjab Chief Minister Darbara Singh welcoming President Giani Zail Singh to the state soon after his swearing-in last fortnight, the onerous demands of protocol were amply compensated by the political relief that Giani's elevated status afforded.

Ever since June 1980, when Darbara Singh was chosen as Punjab's chief minister despite Zail Singh's opposition, the strained relationship between the two Congress(I) leaders, based more on casteist and egoist considerations, had played havoc with the border state. Weakened by the internal dissensions and lacking cooperation from communal elements in the bureaucracy, Darbara Singh could not prevent the seeds of communal disharmony being sown by peo-

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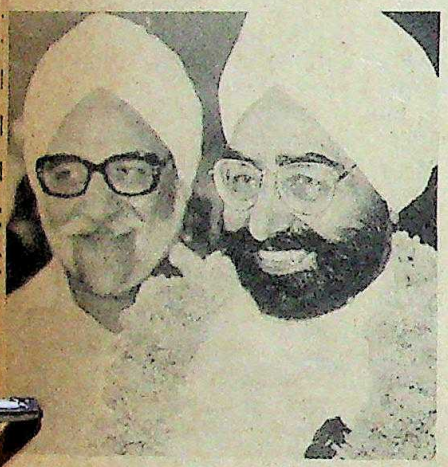
ple within and without his own party leading to the worst ever communal tensions in the nation's granary.

In fact, the state administration encountered major labour, communal and political problems every month for the last 25 months. The chances of restoring peace to the state were reduced by Darbara Singh's refusal to accommodate Zail Singh's supporters in the Cabinet and as chairmen of various public sector corporations. Of the 65-odd Congress(I) MLA's, over 25 owe allegiance to Zail Singh and they looked towards the former home minister for leadership and protection.



Darbara and Zail: clearing the hurdles

New Cohesion: Zail Singh's move out of active politics is expected to generate a much-awaited cohesion in the party. Said a Congress(I) MLA from Punjab: "Our chief minister can now provide strong and clean administration. Now he can't point fingers at others and escape the responsibility for his failures."

Predictably, Darbara Singh chose to project his two-year achievements on the eve of the presidential swearing-in ceremony. Reeling out statistics, at a press conference in New Delhi the chief minister claimed that despite hindrances created by the Opposition and communal elements, he was able to attract new investments worth over Rs 400 crore and introduce a secular culture—a victim of early Akali regimes.

No Change: Political observers in Punjab, however, believe that Zail Singh's nomination will not make any material change in Punjab's communal political scenario. Although not on the scene, he has left behind many Congress(I) leaders who, if encouraged by the Centre, can become a headache for the chief minister. Though Darbara Singh's image is that of a secular leader, he has not been able to carve out an independent following of his own amongst opposition ranks and his own party, an art which Zail Singh had perfected. Moreover, the chief minister, by his frank and straight forward opinions, has swelled the ranks of dissidents who are likely to surface soon.

Zail Singh's supporters have already started rallying around Amrinder Singh, a Doon School educated Lok Sabha member, and Buta Singh, Union minister of state for supply and rehabilitation—both of whom are his followers. Both are being mentioned as possible replacements for Darbara Singh.

But Zail Singh also attempted to bring the Akalis nearer the Central Government. Akali MLA's, for whom Darbara Singh is anathema, are seriously considering a proposal to join an Akali-Congress(I) coalition. This was suggested by Rajiv Gandhi at a meeting held a few months ago at the residence of a Congress(I) MP at which both Prakash Singh Badal, former chief minister, and Baldev Singh, a former finance minister, participated.

Alternative: Since majority of the Congress(I) MLA's are opposed to the imposition of Badal as chief minister, Zail Singh, before he quit active politics, floated Ravi Inder Singh, an affluent Akali MLA and former speaker, as a likely nominee for chief ministership. His only aim was to project a non-controversial alternative to Darbara Singh, capable of not only pacifying Punjab's volatile Sikh community and aggrieved Hindus, but also bridging the widening gulf between the two communities.

Meanwhile, after a brief lull, violence revived in Punjab when some miscreants threw bombs at Darbara Singh's ancestral house in Moga killing one person. The fury followed a crack-down by the police on pro-Khalistan elements in the entire state. Disproving the Opposition's allegation that the state administration was soft-peddling on the issue of combing for extremists, the Punjab police succeeded in nabbing over a dozen of the 40 persons involved in seven major shoot-out incidents, including that of the murder of Lala Jagat Narain which have rocked the state during the last 14 months.

In a further move to restore communal harmony, the state Government introduced a novel idea of constituting district level integration councils comprising leaders from all political and religious communities. Darbara Singh told INDIA TODAY: "If I receive cooperation from everyone, the state Government has the capability of converting Punjab into not only the richest state in the country but also an example of perfect communal harmony." With the removal of most hurdles, all eyes are now fixed in Darbara Singh's future performance.

—PRABHU CHAWLA with
GOBIND THUKRAL in Chandigarh

GUJARAT

The Return Of Bakhia

THE SHORT, balding m... looked terribly nervous a... got out of the car outside... office of the deputy supe... tendent of police (DSP)... Daman. And well he m... be: more than one and a h... months after Sukur Naran Bakhia had c... ked a snook at the law by sneaking out of t... Fort Aguada Jail in Goa, he surfaced aga... handing himself over to the law with hurri... ceremony. This time, he had taken all leg... precautions and the car that accompani... his to the DSP's office on July 19 contained... battery of lawyers.

Bakhia's moves were worthy of a m... reputed to be one of the most successf... smugglers in the country. He had escape... from Fort Aguada to elude the custom... officers waiting outside: they could ha... interned him for at least a year under th... COFEPOSA, without bail. In hiding, in... Bombay and later in Daman, he got his wif... Manekben Bakhia to file a writ petition... the court of the judicial commissioner, Go... challenging the validity of the COFEPO... detention order issued by the Gujar... Government in 1980. On July 14, the judici... commissioner stayed the detention order t... to July 31 on two conditions: Manekb... should ensure that Bakhia did not lea... Daman and reported to the DSP eve... Monday, and she should also produce h... husband in the court of the judicial mag... trate in Goa when the petition would co... up for hearing on July 31.

Interrogation: Bakhia observed the r... les scrupulously, showing up at the DSP... office on the first Monday after the interi... stay was granted. Customs officers were al... there in full force and carried off the... illustrious quarry in triumph minutes afte... the DSP had seen him. Siddharth Sekho... deputy director, revenue intelligence, d... scribed him as a timid man who was nervo... when the officers started asking him que... tions but soon regained his composur... Bakhia told them how he had jumped off th... wall of the Goa jail, taken a rickshaw to... bus-stop and travelled by bus to Bombay.

The alleged smuggler, all of 5 ft 4 inche... dressed in trousers and bush shirt, wi... bathroom slippers on his feet, also said th... he wasn't Bakhia—although his wife says... the writ petition that she is the wife o... Bakhia—had nothing to do with smuggling...

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d that the seven cases relating to smuggl- g instituted against him were pure fabri- tion. He innocently denied knowing any- ing about the *Chandrasagar*, a vessel seized f the Maroli-Daman coast and containing ntraband worth Rs 90 lakh, whose crew d signed statements saying they were orking for Bakhia. However, as the sus- ect, in off the record conversations, also ld stories of how he had outsmarted his ursuers over the years, his hosts did not ke his stand of injured innocence too iously.

Bakhia maintains that he lives off co- chair, considered the plea in his private chambers, and did not even give the public prosecutor a hearing before granting bail. Customs advocates C.N. Desai and B.M. Kolakkar were surprised when the court clerk read out the order to them in the court-room: Kamat did not appear.

Wily Person: For the next few months, Bakhia will be shuttling between Daman, Bulsar, Ahmedabad and Goa, accompanied by his bevy of lawyers, for interrogation by customs officers. He will also be a familiar face in law courts, fighting cases filed by the customs authorities, who have imposed a fine of over Rs 30 lakh. The middle-aged godfather of Daman has lost none of his wiles, although he has lost a lot of weight. He refused to be photographed: his features have changed considerably from the fat, pudgy face appearing in the press.

Bakhia and a lawyer rush from the customs office in Bulsar to avoid being photographed

onut plantations in Daman and Goa, and he rent from two houses. If his income tax eturns are anything to go by, he is knocking t the doors of penury—in 1979–80 he paid Rs 283 and in 1980–81, Rs 480—and his gricultural income shown as Rs 20,000 a year for these two years is not taxable. It is ndeed surprising that with such relatively modest means, he could afford to hire a top solicitors' firm of Bombay. Each hearing, where seven lawyers will defend him, will cost Bakhia at least Rs 75,000.

On July 20, the customs officers arrested Bakhia under the Customs Act, 1962. In their application to S.S. Kamat, the judicial magistrate, first class, Daman, they gave details of his involvement with smuggling and asked that he be remanded to judicial custody. A short while later, Bakhia was free on bail of Rs 10,000 and a personal bond of Rs 10,000. Kamat refused to consider points raised in the application, offered Bakhia a

Bakhia still commands the respect of his native Macchis in Daman. In fact, Laxman Fitter, superintendent of customs, Daman, says that they could not have caught him in Daman since the Macchis—70 per cent of the population—would have sheltered him in their huts. Although his debauched liking for women, especially virgins, has lost him some respect, there are still those who look up to him for guidance. Says Naranbhai Tandel, a taxi-driver: "He has helped hundreds of poor people in Daman."

This most elusive person is as mysterious as ever. His huge Parkota Sheri residence is apparently inhabited only by a gaggle of giggly teenage girls who say they are servants. The heavily guarded Bakhia Wadi is impregnable and a guard said from behind locked doors: "An interview would only help customs officers to further harass our innocent seth." At the moment, he is lying low, but the authorities fear that with the monsoon, Bakhia might resume activities, relying on his sophisticated vessels to throw off pursuit from the vintage boats of the customs. Says a top official: "When the rains come we will just have to throw up our hands." In which case, it's the familiar merry dance once again.

—RAMESH MENON in Daman

WEST BENGAL

Fissures In The Front

THE RIFTS in West Bengal's ruling Left Front deepened last fortnight to assume crisis proportions. Two partners, the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) and the Forward Bloc (FB) refused to budge from their earlier stand that they would not agree to have their portfolios bifurcated. What was worse was that the differences between the Marxists and their non-Communist allies spilt onto the streets when two supporters of the FB were killed in a clash with the Marxists in the north Bengal district of Coochbehar.

The Coochbehar clash has not been the only one of its kind. It was preceded by several clashes between the Marxists and the Communist Party of India (CPI) in the southern district of Midnapore. Both sides have accused each other of engineering the Coochbehar incident, but whatever the truth may be, the fact is that both in Coochbehar and Midnapore the Marxists have been infiltrating traditional FB and CPI strongholds. This is leading to such rivalry that after the Coochbehar clash, ministers of the two parties who occupy rooms on the same floor in Writers' Building issued contradictory statements to the press bringing to mind the bad old days of United Front rule in the late '60s when ministers of the constituent parties used to openly engage in slanging matches.

Functioning Impeded: The war between the coalition partners has inevitably begun to impede the smooth functioning of the administration. The Marxists want to bifurcate crucial portfolios like Industries, Health, Public Works and Panchayats. These are held by the FB and the RSP. But the

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Marxists insist that the present arrangement is purely temporary and as a result officials are thinking twice about carrying out the orders of ministers who may not be there long.

In other matters also the rivalry between the parties is interfering with the administration. The smaller partners are trying to make their presence felt by raising objections even to appointments and transfers. This is again reminiscent of the last days of the second United Front Ministry. Then, as now, neither side is making any effort to hide their differences. One minister who is expecting the axe is even said to have voiced his grouses to former chief minister Siddhartha Shankar Ray, of the Congress(I), when they were travelling on the same British Airways flight from London to Calcutta.

It is not only the RSP and the FB who are aggrieved over the portfolio issue. The lone CPI minister Kanai Bhowmick is yet to accept any office as his party has made it clear that it would only accept a department directly related to rural welfare. The Marxists are prepared to oblige the CPI but only at the cost of either the RSP or the FB. Meanwhile the CPI has threatened to quit the ministry if not given a portfolio of its choice.

Basu: in charge

Furore: The bifurcation proposal would not have created the noise that it did if the Marxists had not made it clear that they would hold the new portfolios thus created. Chief Minister Jyoti Basu is reported to have clearly stated: "We want these portfolios bifurcated for effective functioning and that would not be possible if we do not take charge of the new offices." The retort to this by the RSP and FB is: "The Marxists have been running the power and transport departments but can anyone say that these are very well run?"

The acrimonious discontent over the portfolios issue came abruptly to the boil last fortnight when six ministers—three each of the FB and the RSP—submitted their resignations from the ministry. The fissures in the front appeared to be inexorably growing wider: but a day later, obviously after hurried parleys to patch up relations, both the FB and the RSP postponed their decisions to quit Basu's government, and an RSP spokesman told a press conference that Left Coordination Committee Chairman Promode Dasgupta wanted to discuss the bifurcation issue at the next meeting of the committee on August 5. The ministers will continue in their posts—for the time being.

—SUMANTA SEN

GOA

Bouncing Back

REPUTATIONS, once lost, are never easy to redeem. But one man who seems to be bouncing back with undisguised haste is Jagmohan, 52, Delhi's former lieutenant-governor and the man branded as an arch villain of the Emergency caucus. When Jagmohan was exiled to the relative obscurity of Goa as lieutenant-governor in March 1981, his administrative career appeared to have come to an inglorious end.

The Goans, normally the most tolerant and apolitical of people, accepted his appointment with ill-concealed suspicion. After all, Jagmohan's reputation as a hard driving, corner cutting bulldozer of a bureaucrat, and his closeness with the late Sanjay Gandhi, had been freely aired, even in the backwaters of Goa. "The bulldozer has arrived," was the popular reaction to his sudden arrival in Panjim. Today, Jagmohan is probably the only governor in the country who actually receives fan mail from the citizens of the administrative territory.

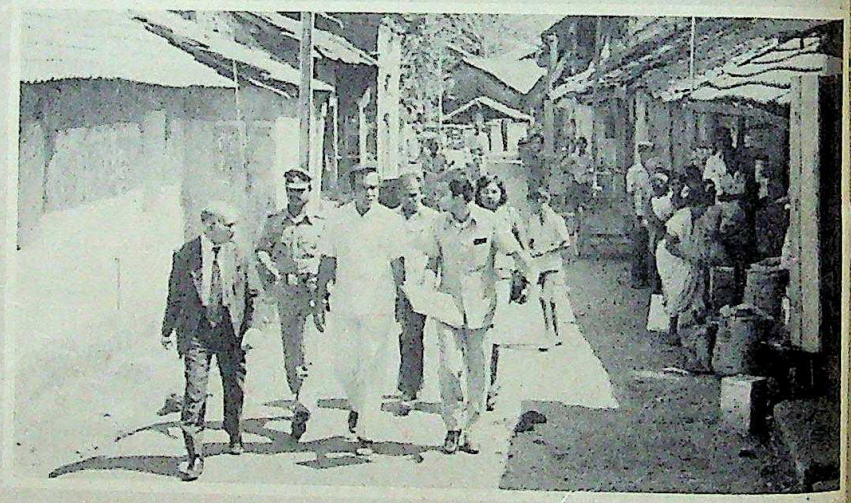
The reason, ironically enough, is Jagmohan's "operation clean-up", but one that is vastly different from his similar efforts in Delhi back in the Emergency. Obviously learning from the past mistakes, Jagmohan launched an indirect attack on the local municipality by holding a series of public meetings in Panjim at which he asked the people to shame the municipality into action. "Paint your houses, trim the hedges, clean up your compounds and the municipality will be forced to match your efforts," he exhorted the populace. And the people of Panjim did just that. The result was that the municipality suddenly awoke from protracted slumber and the city's garbage dumps and the filth in the streets disappeared overnight. Having gained acceptance, Jagmohan's popularity ratings climbed even further when he threw open his mansion or Cabo Raj Niwas on Dona Paula hill to daily durbars where he hears complaints and often acts on them.

Image Transformed: Pretty soon the fan mail started pouring in and Jagmohan's image was transformed from an arrogant autocrat into that of a benign godfather. Encouraged by the popular response, Jagmohan launched his new broadside at the illegal felling of trees by unscrupulous contractors—a major ecological problem facing Goa and one that had powerful political overtones.

Jagmohan is now all set to move on to greater things, one of them being the firm establishment of Goa as a progressive and important part of the Indian Union. He is currently hard at work on his pet project—the setting up of a Goa university based on the East West Centre in Hawaii. "My idea is to establish an educational and research centre where intellectual minds would like to converge from all parts of the world."

Simultaneously, he is busy on his ultimate dream to put Goa firmly on the international tourist map. For a start, he has ambitious plans to invite the Commonwealth heads of state who will be meeting in New Delhi in November 1983, to Goa for a post-conference working holiday à *la* Cancun. Runways are being extended, golf-courses built and hotel projects scanned. Jagmohan is obviously a man in a hurry to redeem a reputation, and so far he has succeeded.

—ASOKA RAINA in Panaji



Jagmohan doing the rounds in Bicholim: benign godfather?

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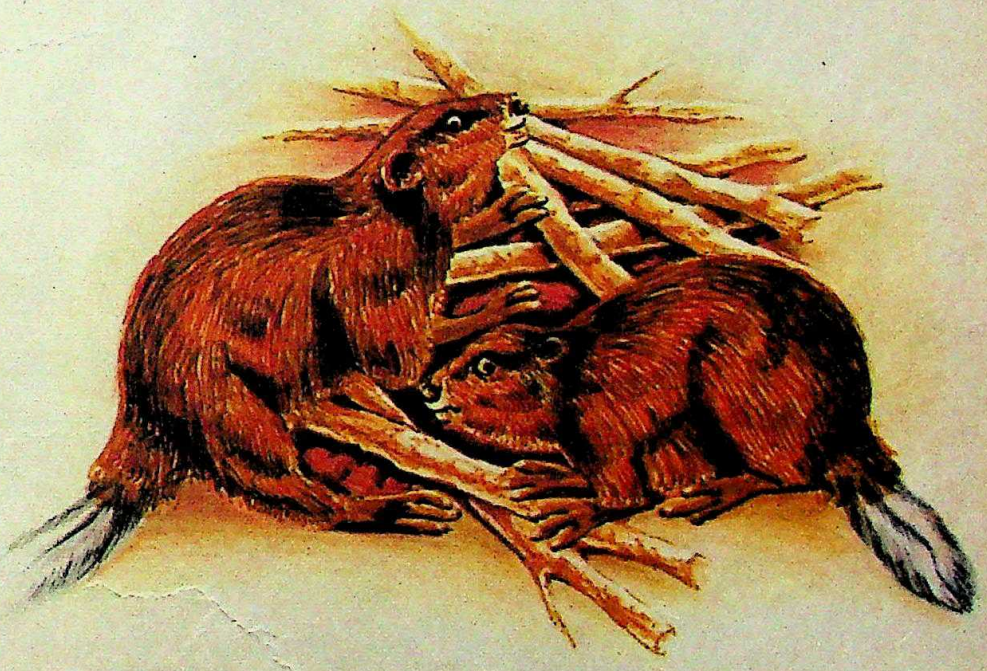
Chairman: In his letter to shareholders.



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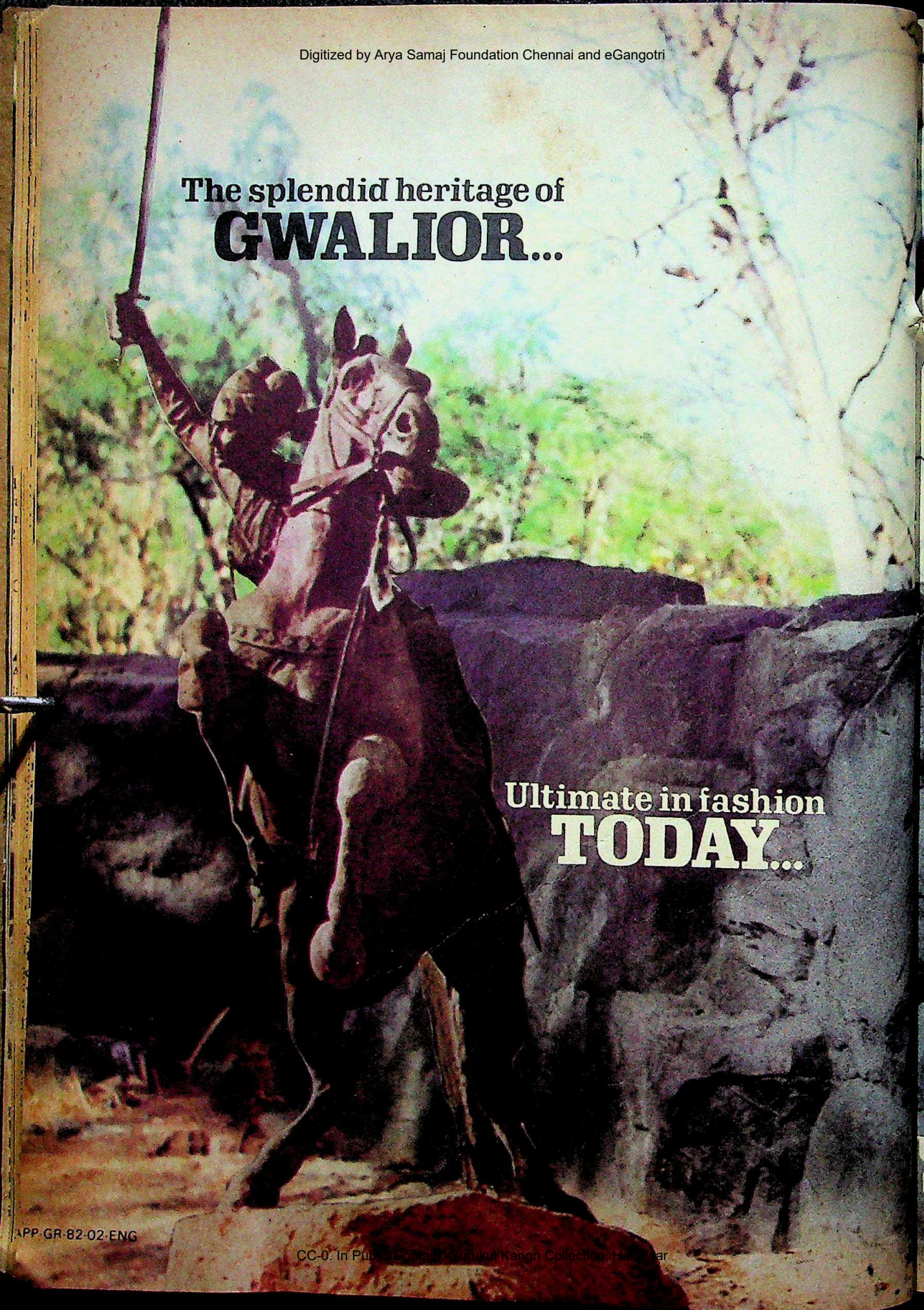

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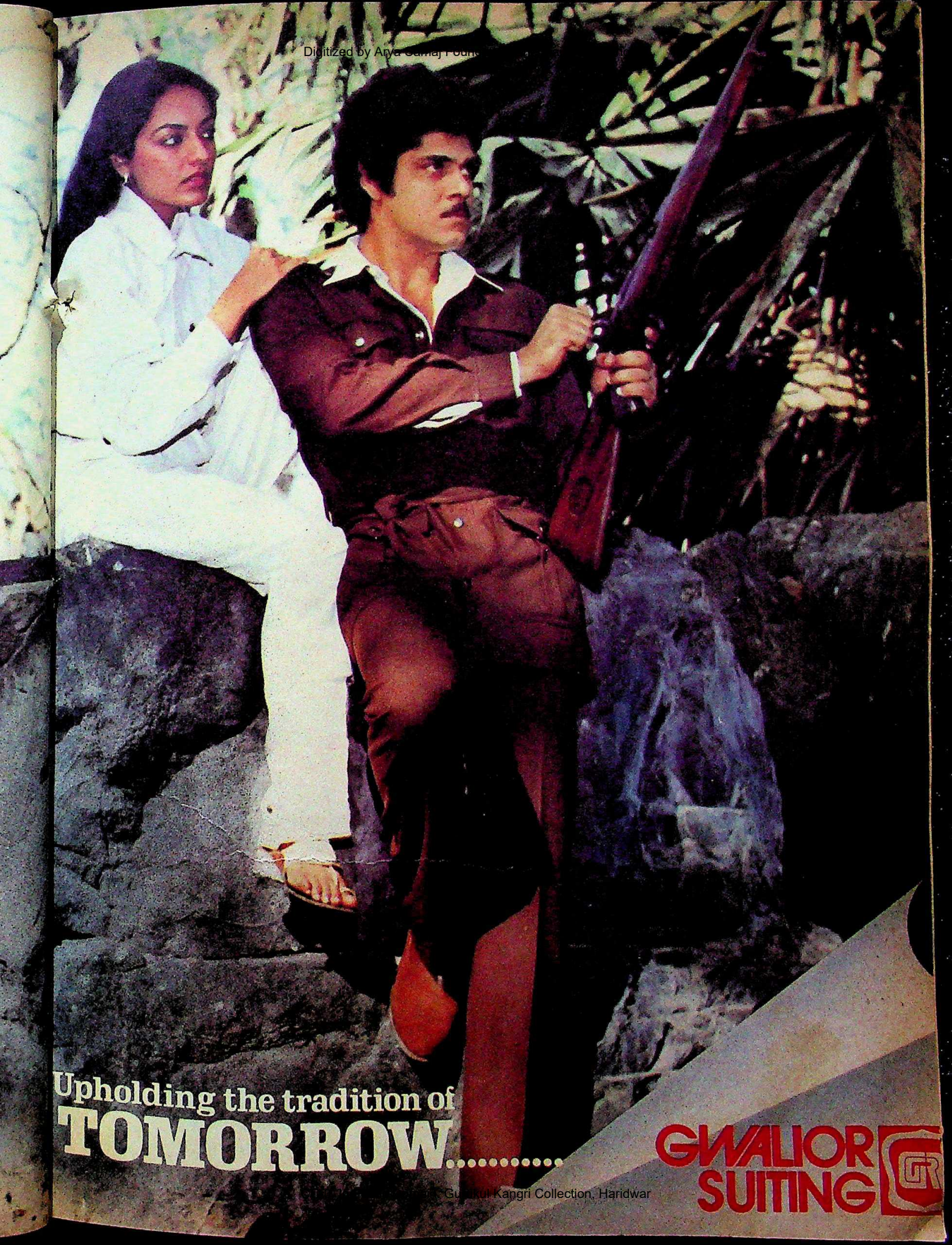

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BOM 125

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ADHYA PRADESH

A Pincer Movement

THE POLITICAL cauldron in Madhya Pradesh is on the boil again. But exactly whose goose is being cooked is as yet unclear with Chief Minister Arjun Singh heading for a confrontation with the Harijan and Adivasi ministers in his Cabinet.

The spark was provided by an apparently trivial incident that occurred in the last week of June. Ashok Sharma, former vice-president of the state Youth Congress(I), is alleged to have barged into the residence of Panchayat Minister Bhanwar Singh Porte and abused him. Sharma, a close associate of parliamentarian Gufran-e-Azam, later cockily told a press conference that he was sorry he had not behaved in a more abusive manner. He was arrested and released immediately on bail.

By itself, the incident meant little and could have been dismissed as a display of bad temper. But Porte, Industries Minister Jhumuklal Bhedia, Revenue Minister Tumanlal and Forest Minister Vedram did not think so. The four Harijan-Adivasi leaders, who form a lobby, have been under pressure for some time and have interpreted this incident as an attack on the Harijans and Adivasis.

Instant Reaction: Ten Harijan-Adivasi legislators immediately issued a press statement saying that this was just another in a series of incidents, the purpose of which was to intimidate them. They said that a similar incident had occurred with Tumanlal, Ganga Potai, a junior minister, and several other legislators.

Said Arjun Singh referring to the incident: "I have instructed the police to take legal action." But there was no statement from him condemning the attack, which an Adivasi legislator says only shows the chief minister's indifferent attitude. Says Bhedia: "There is a political attempt to isolate the Harijan-Adivasi legislators in the state."

While tension with the chief minister on this score is long-standing, it has gained new significance in the context of persistent rumours that a Cabinet reshuffle is on the cards though Arjun Singh blandly says: "I have not applied my mind to it." Arjun Singh inducted the four Harijan-Adivasi ministers two years ago hoping to meet V.C. Shukla's challenge in Chhattisgarh to which Bhedia, Porte, Tumanlal and Vedram belong. But once Shukla was dropped from the Union Cabinet, Arjun Singh has been sidelining them and it seemed that they had served their purpose.

(From left) Vedram, Deputy Chief Minister Solanki, Arjun Singh, Bhedia and Porte: growing tension in the ranks

The rift has only been growing wider with each passing month. The dissidents also feel that tribal welfare schemes have been treated shabbily. Says one MLA: "The supreme body, the Tribal Advisory Council, has not met once in the past two years. What more evidence does one need?" Adds another: "Take it from me, if our government continues to operate like this, the Harijans and Adivasis won't support it in the next election." But if the tribals are not happy, neither is the Brahmin lobby which is appalled at the extent of representation that tribals have in the Cabinet, the highest ever in the state's history. The past two years have only served to embitter them further.

If the Harijan and Adivasi legislators are over-reacting to the Porte incident it is because of the feeling that in the event of a reshuffle, Porte and Vedram may emerge losers. The temporary patch-up between Arjun Singh and Shukla after the Jabalpur by-election has made them nervous. Says one senior MLA: "The Brahmins under Shukla are trying to gang up with the chief minister against us." Faced with such formidable opposition the four ministers are now turning towards Union Railway Minister Prakash Chand Sethi, the third force in the state's politics. Last fortnight Vedram, Porte and Tumanlal were in Delhi with their followers reportedly to state their case to the party's high command.

Friction: At the state level, however, no one seems to be getting along with anyone else. Two divisional level conferences organised at Gwalior and Indore, last fortnight, rapidly degenerated into a mêlée with one group of Congress(I) workers trying to hoot down the other. But General Secretary of the state unit, Jagatpal Singh, had some impressive figures to quote: "The party's primary membership in the state has nearly doubled to 13 lakh and tribal membership has grown similarly to 50,000 in just two years." Yet he admits: "Because some MP's have not visited their constituencies, there is frustration at the grass roots level."

At the top too, the situation is not happy. Arjun Singh and Pradesh Congress Committee (I) (PCC-I) President Ram Gopal Tiwari are not on good terms and relations have deteriorated further with Tiwari's report to the high command on the Jabalpur by-election. According to sources Tiwari has listed the state Government's performance as a major cause for the party's shock defeat at the hands of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Arjun Singh confines his remarks on this to oblique references. Says he: "No one can accuse me of not cooperating with the state party leadership. But if my cooperation is not sought, that is a different matter."

In the wake of the Jabalpur loss—the BJP's third victory in five by-elections in two years—there were expectations of a change in the ministry. The high command has desisted from doing so, probably because there is no acceptable replacement in sight. On July 24, 17 of Singh's colleagues, including 10 ministers, unexpectedly issued a statement saying they had no differences with the chief minister and wanted no change in leadership. The statement, reportedly issued under pressure, was an effort to paper over the crisis and it signified little for the security of Singh's job.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

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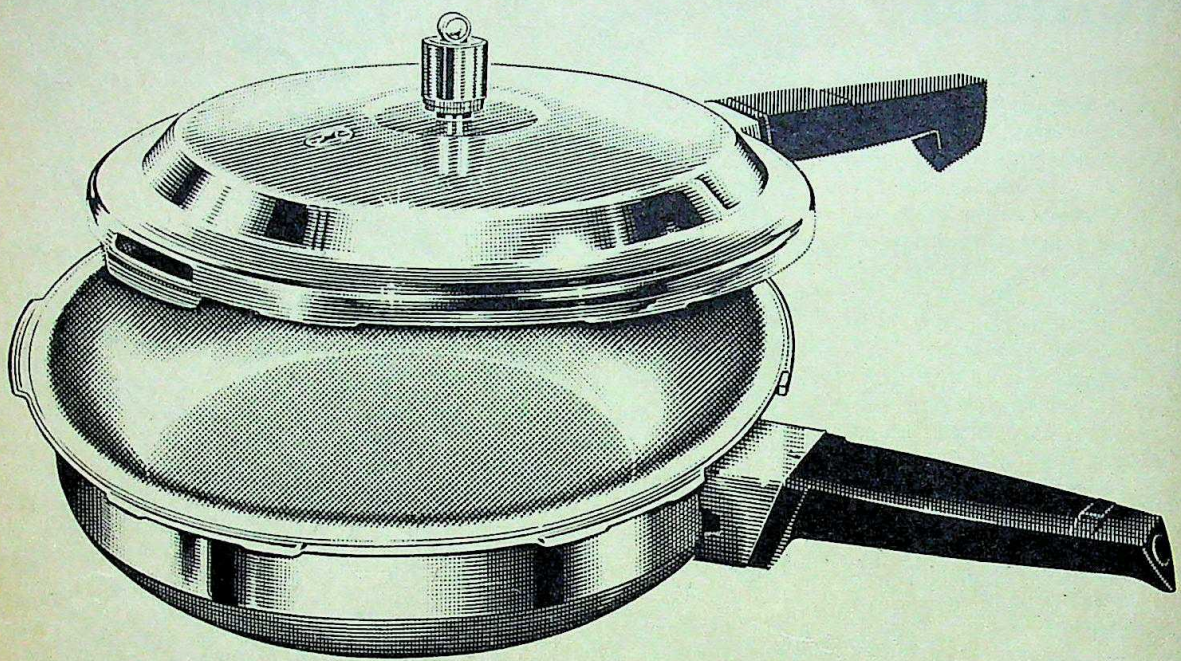

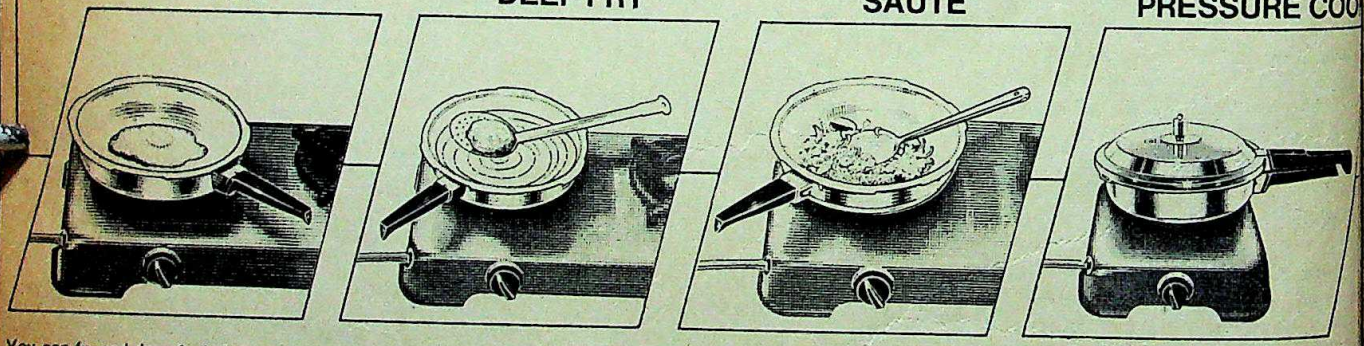

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ANDHRA PRADESH

A Politician's Education

WHAT's new about a politician breaking promises? Nothing really. But even by the dubious standards of his tribe K. Kesava Rao, the Andhra Pradesh education minister, stands out.

Rao moved into his job one year ago with all the apparent fervour of a crusading knight. Within weeks he let it be known that he aimed at nothing less than overturning the established system. He minced no words about his intentions, proclaiming: "The educational system is illogical, irrational and meaningless and does not inculcate any basic values."

Brave words. And more were to follow. Each week Rao would hit the headlines with new statements of intent. He started by announcing that all schools and colleges would open, finalise admissions, hold exams and release results on the same day. Hard on the heels of this came a string of announcements each more startling than the other. Rao said that rural service would be made compulsory at the plus two stage so that "students could be exposed to the rigours of village life."

Kesava Rao: promises, promises

Novel Schemes: The National Cadet Corps, National Service Scheme and physical education were also to become compulsory for all college students in graduate courses. In addition five marks would be added to four subjects and a cash award of Rs 200 would be given to students who taught five people how to read. As if this was not enough, Rao then announced that he wanted to consign the examination system to the dustbin as it had 'outlived its utility' and replace it by open-book examinations. After this he said that admission to M.A. courses would be restricted as students joined 'merely to spend time on the campus'.

FORESTS

Log Jam

FOREST officials in Andhra Pradesh raided a house in Hyderabad last fortnight and netted 487 logs of high quality sawn teak. In doing so, they provided Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Bhavanam Venkatram with a strong political lever: the house belonged to his detractor and former minister Sudhakar Rao, the brain behind the Panchayati Raj Forum, a body of disgruntled Congressmen led by former chief minister T. Anjiah.

The haul by itself is not very big—1,470 cu ft of wood valued at Rs 3 lakh. It is alleged that Rao had trees felled in the protected forests close to his village Rajampet in Adilabad district and transported without valid permits and transit marks to Hyderabad. If the charges are proved, Rao will have to pay a fine that can go as high as Rs 8 lakh, and also face prosecution for illegal and unauthorised possession of forest produce.

Investigators claim that they have plenty of evidence to prove their point but admit they are preparing for a prolonged legal battle. Their story is that the trees, after being felled, were taken to a saw mill at Luxettipet and then sent in four trucks to Hyderabad in May and June. Asked about the delay in making the raid, an investigator replied: "The forest guards did not report it for fear of reprisal. We did not want to take chances as an important person was involved. The raid was made only after looking for the missing timber in a factory that the family is setting up in Medak district."

Political Fall-out: Predictably, Rao supporters charge that the raid is politically motivated. The politician, very conscious of his image, is keeping a low profile. He had won a following when he had resigned from former chief minister Chenna Reddy's cabinet in 1979, accusing his leader of corruption, megalomania and an imperial style of functioning. Earlier, he had resigned his post as head of the Department of Public Administration at Osmania University to immerse himself in the 1969–70 Telengana agitation led by Reddy.

Rao: heavy penalty

The seized teak: political lever

Much more than Rao's embarrassment, however, the haul is bound to have its effect on the acrimonious Congress(I) politics. By a strange coincidence, soon after the raid, Anjiah categorically declared that he had no plans to quit the party—his forum had threatened off and on to walk out of the fold. This might draw the teeth of the teak scandal, but Venkatram is not likely to let go such a perfect opportunity to strike back at his tormentors in the party.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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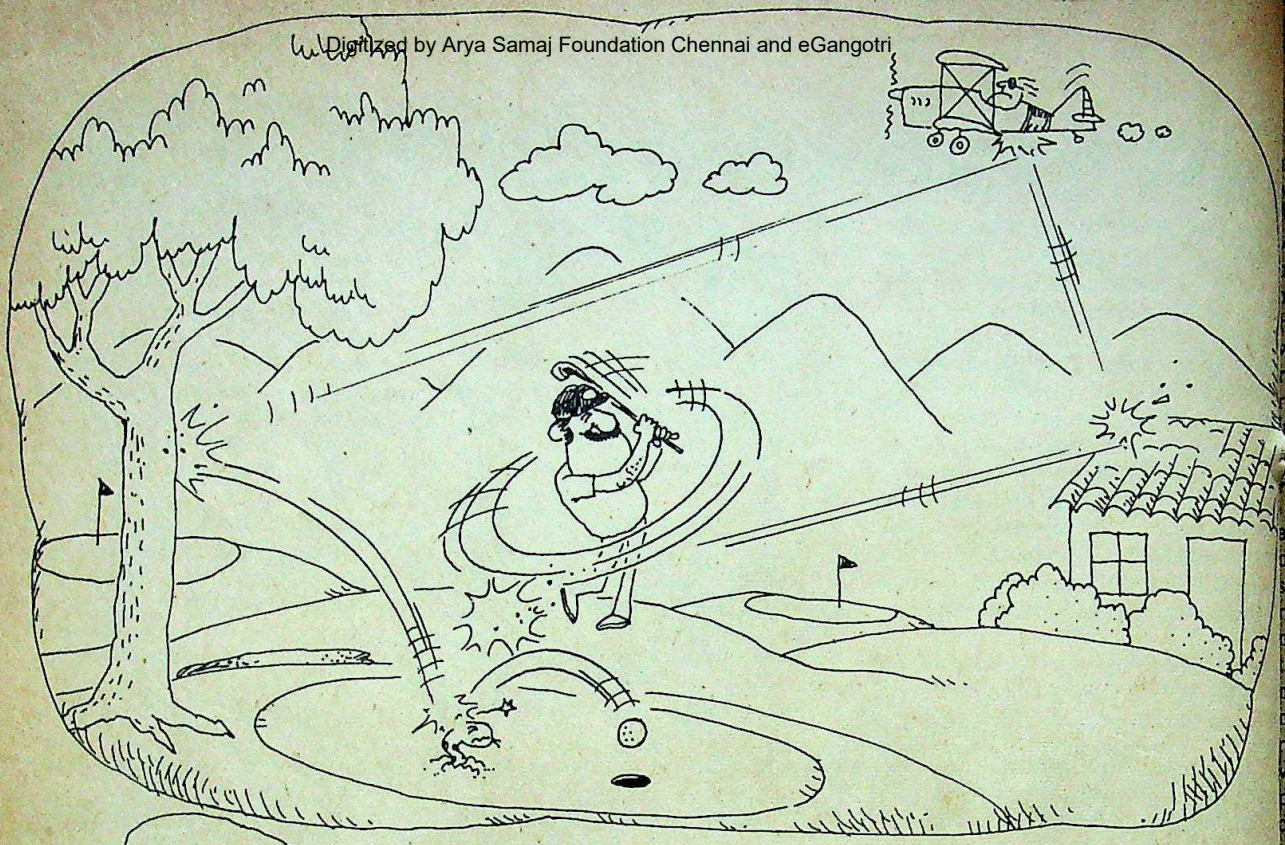

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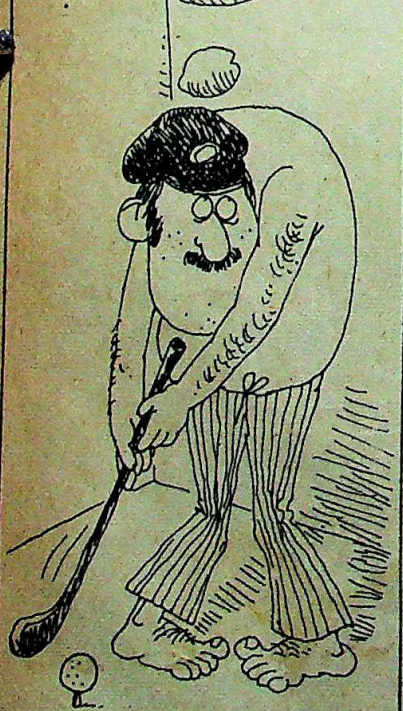

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The next target was the practice of collecting capitation fees. Rao threatened to lay down a set of rules, which if implemented would have knocked the bottom out of the collection of such funds. He said that private schools were only to collect fees as prescribed by the Government and such donations were not to be collected between the months of February and August. Various other curbs were to be imposed and donations were to be routed through district educational authorities and if it was found that the donor was in any way related to a student who was admitted during that academic year the school would be de-recognised.

But as the old saying goes, there is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip and Rao soon discovered that promises easily made are not so easily carried out. At a press conference recently he said he had asked the chief minister for a new portfolio. He lamented that he had become too entangled in the minutiae of the job, saying: "Though the minister in charge, I do not deal with files relating to educational issues. My job involves dealing with colleges and the career problems of teachers." He added that he could "do nothing under the present system," and had been frustrated, "with the attitude of friends including Cabinet colleagues who held mis-directed views." He added defiantly that if the chief minister did not change his portfolio he would take it as a gesture of confidence.

Judgement Pronounced: The chief minister has yet to reach a decision but the academic world has already pronounced judgement on Rao. Says one teacher: "We remember him as a noisy student leader." Rao's Cabinet colleagues are equally sceptical and one remarks: "With his experience as a journalist on a small-time daily, Kesava Rao beats us all to the front page."

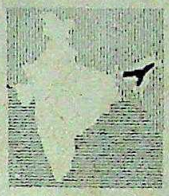
This may well be the final verdict on Rao's achievements as none of his grand plans ever seems to get off the ground. Even the high-level committee promised in May to draft a white paper on educational reforms has not come into being yet. Head of the Osmania University Philosophy Department, Professor V. Madhusudan Reddy, who was supposed to have been on the commission admits that he has yet to receive official intimation about it.

But those most affected by the changes—the students—appear to have heard the word and taken it to heart. Recently they went on strike to protest that textbooks promised to them had still not been delivered. And if the students of the state decide to go on the rampage there may yet be a come-uppance for a politician who makes such facile promises without the least intention of keeping them.

— AMARNATH K. MENON

ASSAM

Season For Compromise



WHILE to the outside world the Centre's periodic attempts at a settlement of the Assam agitation appear to be just another meaningless exercise, within the state there is today a controlled optimism about the talks that Home Minister R. Venkataraman proposes to hold next month with leaders of both opposition parties and agitators to end the three-year-old impasse. Most leaders of the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) seem to feel that something tangible is bound to emerge from the talks, precisely because the Centre cannot afford to leave the foreigners' issue unresolved and at the same time announce elections in the state which, according to the Constitution, are due next March.

Also, it is evident that the AASU leadership is by and large getting a bit tired of having to keep an agitation going with its end nowhere in sight, unless they agree to meet the Centre halfway. There is also a growing fear that if the stalemate is allowed to continue, extremist elements within the movement may gain much bigger control, which the moderate leaders Bhrigu Phukan and Prafulla Mahanta cannot allow to happen. And, having been in the limelight for three years now, quite a few student leaders feel that they should get involved in the politics of the state at the parliamentary level too. Said one "that would give us a greater opportunity of serving the interests of Assam". That opportunity will, however, elude them if they refuse to be more accommodating. And there are signs that they recognise this even though they have called for a resumption of the agitation next month.

Student Factor: Organisationally also, the AASU has its own problems. For over three years now there has been no change in the top state-level leadership, even though the various units have new office-bearers. According to informed sources in Gauhati, leaders like Phukan and Mahanta are today feeling a bit uneasy lest one day an accusing finger be pointed at them from within the organisation, charging them with holding on to their offices without achieving anything. Thus, currently, the student leaders are frantically striving to arrive at a formula which will end the stalemate and at the same time ensure that they do not lose face to any great extent.

Right now all eyes in the state are turned towards the students as the future depends entirely on their course of action. The other partner in the agitation, the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP), a loose combination of regional and chauvinistic parties, hardly has any base in the state and on its own will not be able to carry on the agitation to any great extent if the students ever wish to call it a day. Constituents of the AAGSP are also aware of this and already one of them, the Purbanchaliya Loka Parishad (PLP) is seeking new pastures in the north-east by trying to tie up with other like-minded regional parties.

Phukan and Mahanta: striving to save face

Credentials: According to present indications, elections will be held on the basis of the 1979 electoral rolls, updated for the 1980 Lok Sabha polls which were held only in the Bengali-dominated Cachar district. These rolls would need to be revised, and the chief electoral officer's office in Dispur is fairly confident that the task can be completed in four months once there is an agreement as to who should be considered foreigners and whose names should to be struck off.

Interestingly enough, last fortnight posters had appeared in the Pan Bazar area of Gauhati claiming that Nepalese were not

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reigners in Assam. This sudden love for the epalese would be largely inexplicable if one d not associate the posters with the PLP's claration that any common regional party r the north-east would also have to shoul- r the responsibility of people of common hnic stock living in the northern districts of est Bengal. This—in simpler terms would point to the Nepalese. There was othing in the posters, however, to indicate ho had issued them.

Foreigners: With hopes of a settlement ain in the air, the issue that is posing a oblem is the fate of people who may be entified as foreigners. Bangladesh is un- kely to honour the Indira-Mujib Agree- ent according to which it is supposed to ke back all nationals who may have cro- ed over since 1971, and if the Assamese itators insist on their being thrown out of e state then they will have no other place to but West Bengal. But that Government ys it will take no more refugees as it is eltering 13,000 refugees in camps in the rthern districts. The Assam Government sputes this figure.

Thus it seems that while the Centre may rive at a settlement with the agitators and ap itself on the back, its efforts may not se the misery of a lot of Bengali-speaking ople who would find themselves unwanted th in Assam and in West Bengal.

—SUMANTA SEN

EGHALAYA

Transmitting Trouble

THE WORLD Cup football frenzy last month had more than a billion people glued to their television sets. Some of them were in the north-eastern state of Meghalaya, where the chief minister and few of his cabinet members clustered round set in the Government Circuit House in nonsoon-drenched Cherrapunji to watch he proceedings in faraway Spain, courtesy angladesh television. And thereby hangs a ale.

Doordarshan has not reached out to the orth-east despite all the promises, hence roving once again that the noblest of overnment schemes for that region have a abit of running into the most elementary roblems. While the Information and roadcasting (I&B) Ministry engineers cool eir heels and the deadlines draw closer, ey have not been allotted the land at auhati for building the television studio nd transmission facilities that were sup- posed to bring the north-east on the country's TV map.

The chances of completing this scheme within the Sixth Plan period are remote. However, for some time hopes were raised by a promise of giving the region at least an INSAT-linked network for the time being. But, as is wont, the scheme has remained only on paper, with little indication of implementation. Even if these are taken up, there is little chance of the north-easterners watching the Asiad on Doordarshan. Said Meghalaya's Congress(I) Chief Minister W.A. Sangma, at a recent high-level conference in Delhi: "We want the television before the Asiad. Our people do not want to see the Games on the Bangladesh TV."

Sanction: The INSAT link plan has also suffered due to the official apathy in Delhi. The North-Eastern Council (NEC) sanctioned Rs 25 crore for the scheme, for setting up studios at the seven state and Union territory capitals in the north-east and 13 transmitters: three in Assam, four in Arunachal Pradesh, two in Meghalaya and one each in Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura.

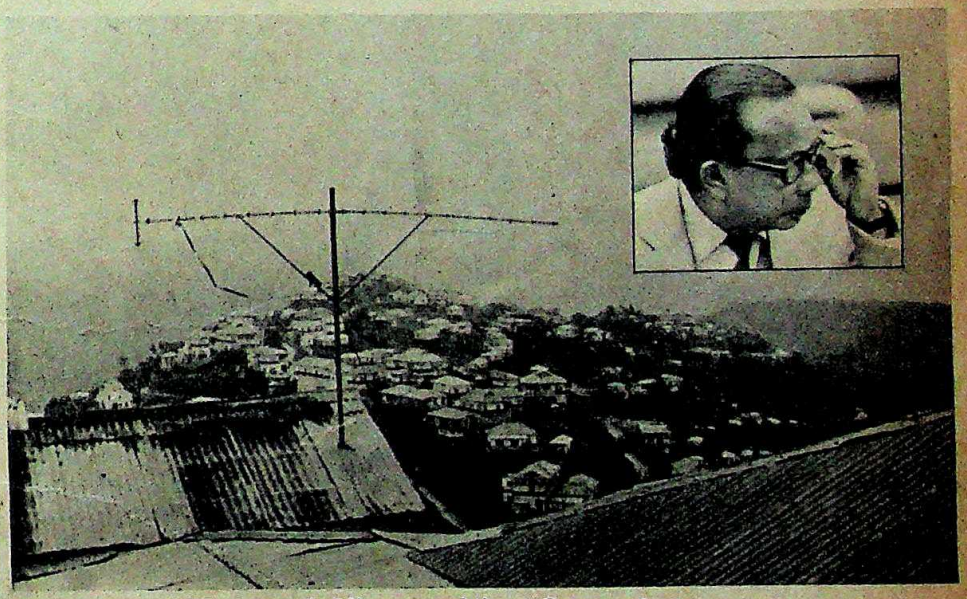
Meanwhile the I&B Ministry presented a working paper proposing to channelise programmes produced at these studios through a grid at Shillong, besides relaying national network programmes for an hour a day. Although the Planning Commission has given a go-ahead on the plan, there seems to be no sign of action. Sources in the I&B Ministry and the NEC seem certain that the Asiad viewing is out of the reckoning.

In spite of this, in border towns like Agartala, Aizawl, Tura (Garo Hills) and even to an extent Shillong, TV showrooms are reporting brisk business. Skylines in Agartala, Aizawl and Tura are already dotted with TV antennae and comprehensive sales and maintenance establishments have come up with no prospect of Doordarshan reaching the region for years

Encouraging Experience: The Bangladesh viewers have had encouraging experience during the World Cup football on TV—for them it was one way of living through the curfew and violence. It nearly threw the Government out of gear in Meghalaya, where, apart from privately owned TV sets in border villages a set has been installed in the Government Circuit House at Cherrapunji. For days together a majority of Cabinet ministers including the chief minister drove in a procession, braving the typical Cherrapunji monsoon and holding cabinet sittings of a sporting kind. They were joined on the day of the finals by almost 1,000—leading very nearly to a fracas of the kind common on Indian playing fields.

A young entrepreneur who had installed a receiver at Mawphland, about 20 km from Shillong, preferred to dismantle it and bring it back before the finals began rather than accommodate a crowd of drunken supporters of the Assembly speaker. The latter was a special invitee but since Mawphland is his constituency he could not say no to his soccer-crazy supporters.

It was good fun till it lasted and now people are making sure they do not have to be in the queues during the Asiad. But this will help only in the border belt. Most of the Assamese cannot catch Bangladesh TV. Experts say the best course is to arrange for community viewing on the SITE (satellite instructional television experiment) pattern, using mesh-type antennae (each costing Rs 8,000) receiving signals from INSAT-IA.



A TV antenna in Mizoram and (inset) Sangma: broken promises

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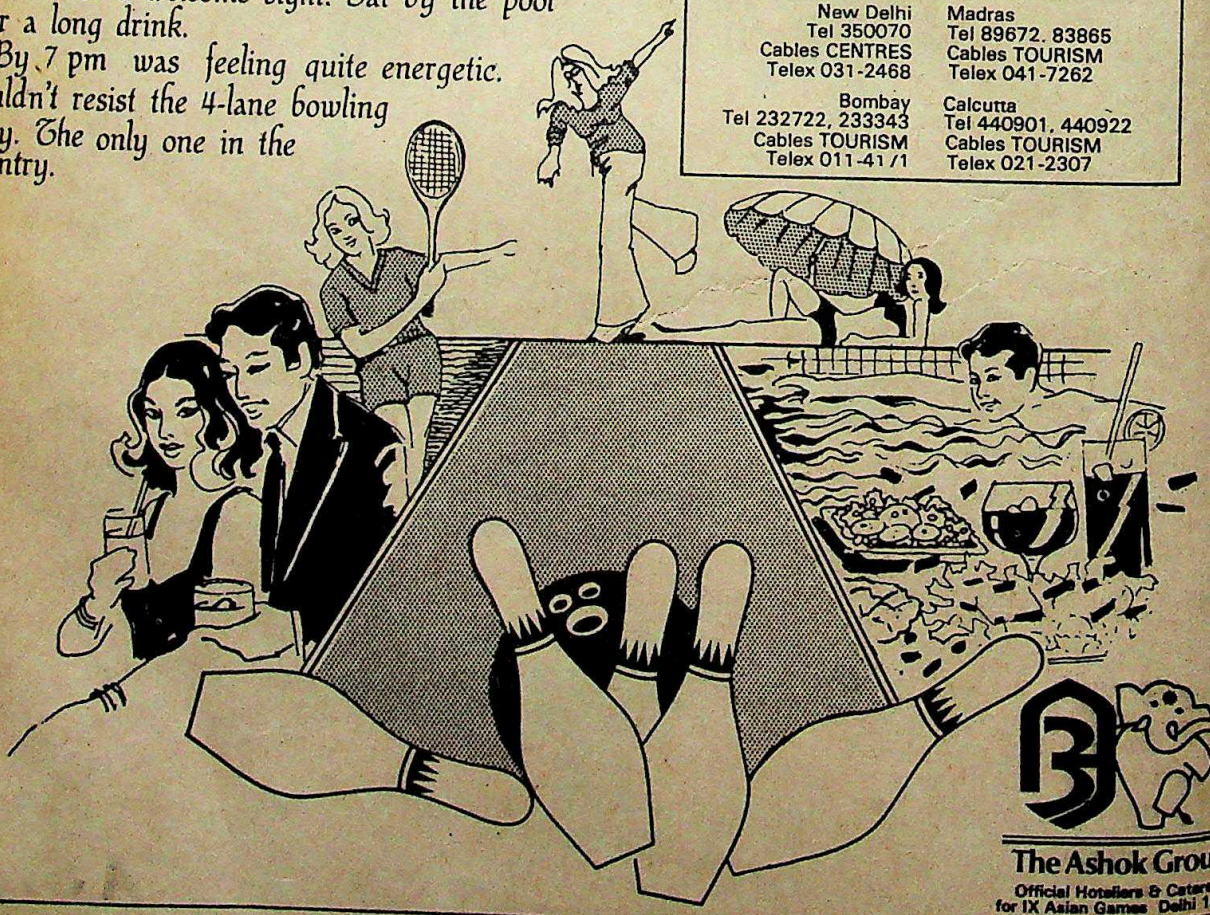

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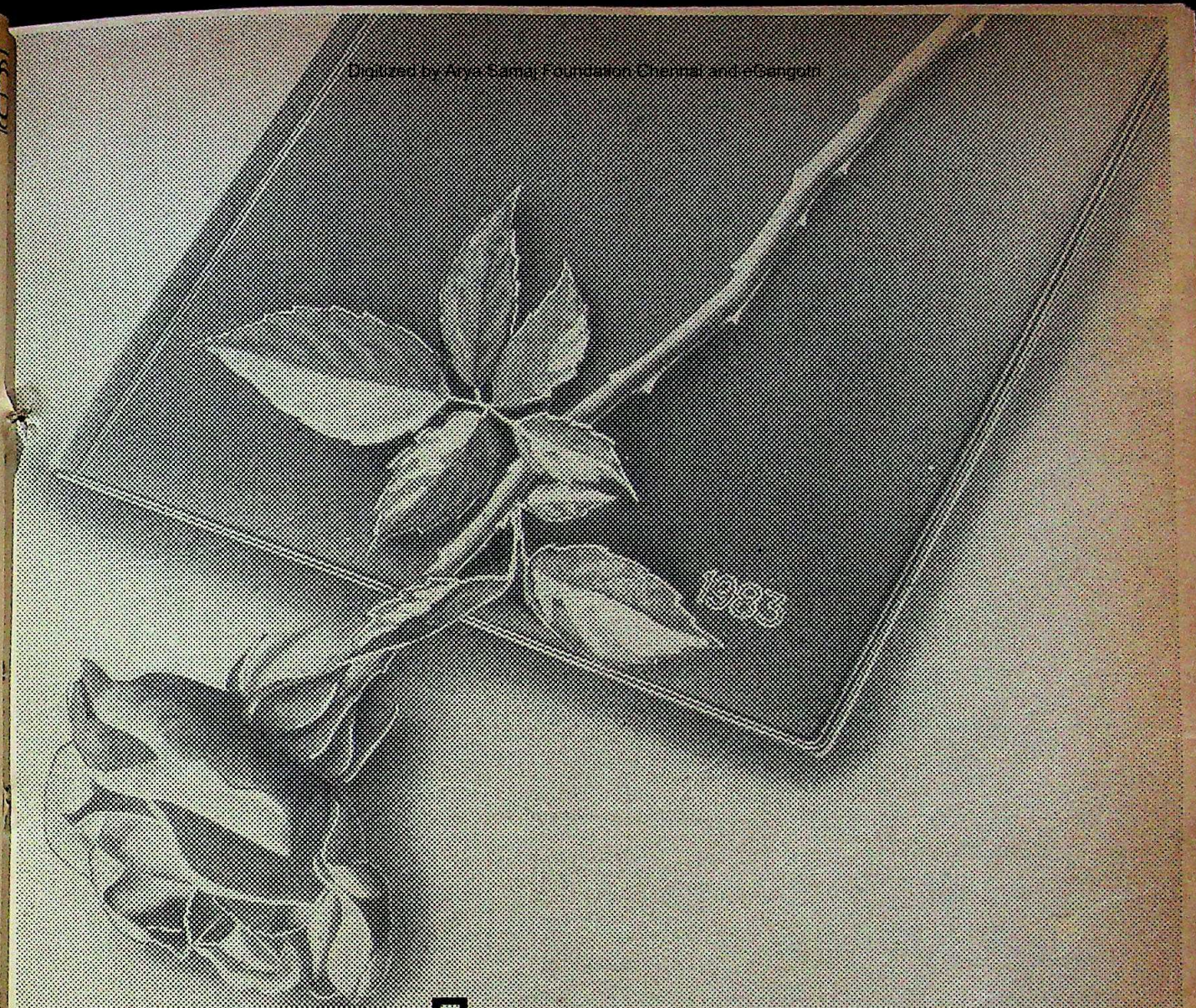

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Age And Innocence

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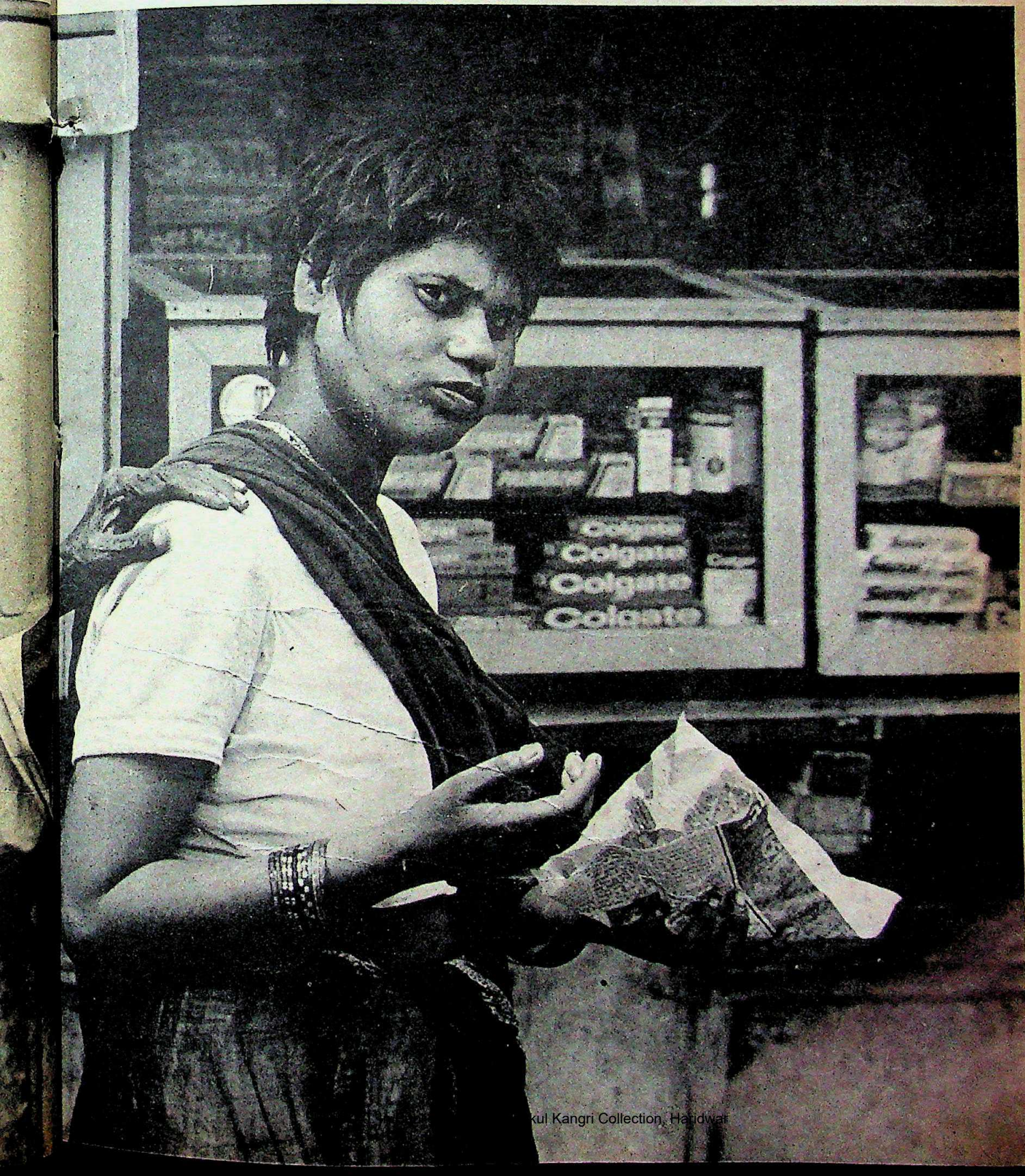
In the poverty and filth of a Baroda backstreet, a blind, 70-year-old Muslim beggar and a young, mentally retarded Hindu girl are playing out the last act of a human relationship that is at once unique and unforgettable.



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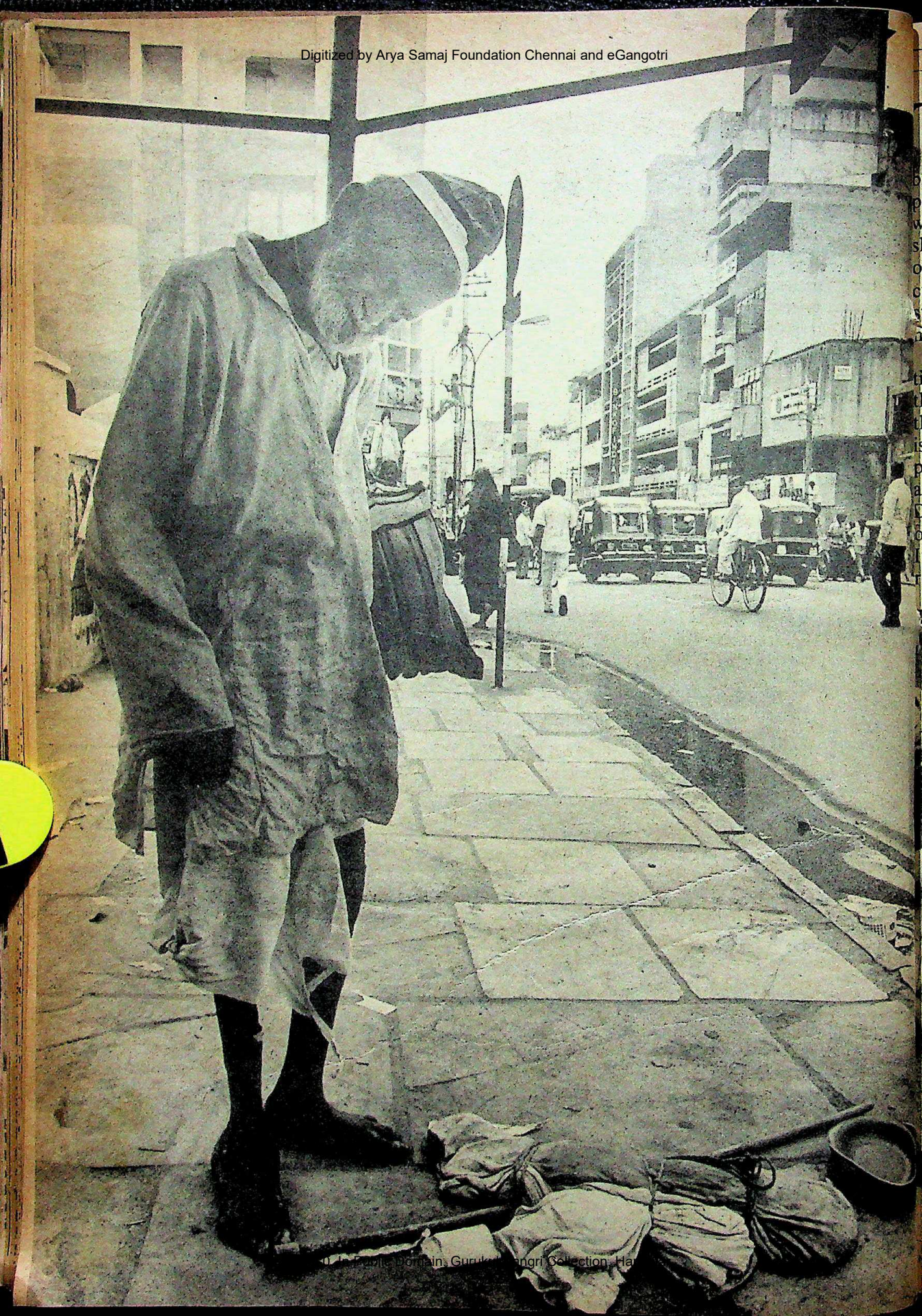

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THEIR stage is a grimy pavement plot in the heart of bustling Baroda. Their audience is largely a mobile one: vehicles with horns blaring, struggling for space with handcarts and pedestrians. Occasionally, a group of passers-by will stop briefly and watch the performers before shrugging and walking on. The play has a cast of only two people. A blind old man, wrinkled and curled up in a foetal position among the cigarette stubs and discarded wrappers, and a young woman with short-cropped hair and tattered sari.

The play opens daily at dawn and carries on till late at night and it is, with minor variations, the same each day. And yet, the audience watches the performance with morbid fascination. For this is no streetside theatre. The performance is a poignant, real-life human drama, more riveting and realistic than anything that Moliere or Dostoyevsky could have dreamed up. It is a drama of poverty and passion, of insanity and innocence. It is, above all, a drama of a unique human relationship acted out in public, and yet more private and fulfilling than most.

Pathos: The man is Nazeer Ahmed, a ragged and blind beggar whose memory is as blank as his unseeing eyes. His wrinkled face and trembling hands betray his antiquity but he himself has forgotten how old he is or how long he has lived on that filthy piece of pavement. Local residents say the old man has been in the same spot for the last 25 years, plucking at the sleeves of indifferent passers-by with his grimy, gnarled fingers, his sightless eyes turned up in mute supplication. For all those years, his only companion was his battered tin begging bowl. In a grim parody of Shakespeare's ages of man, he regressed into infancy, his words incoherent, his needs child-like.

Then, last year, a miracle happened. A young, mentally retarded girl named Hira came into his life. Nobody knows how it happened or what unspoken understanding passed between them; but one day he was alone and uncared for, and the next: she was there beside him on the pavement.

Faithful Companions: To bemused onlookers,

Nazeer with his few worldly possessions (left) and Hira takes taunting youths in her stride

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the two represent the classic odd couple: an old, sightless man of over 70 and a young, energetic girl in her mid-twenties. But there is a discernible touch of envy in their ribald remarks. For the relationship reveals a rapport and closeness that makes a mockery of the difference in age. Hira, the girl, cares for the old man like a father and a lover. Few words pass between them but it is evident in the teasing gestures she makes, her innocent embraces and her flirtatious behaviour.

Then, suddenly, the role switches and she is the dutiful, loving daughter. As dawn breaks o their private pavement patch, she rises from t rags and wanders barefoot down to the loc *dhaba*, a handful of coins jingling in her palm She is strict about paying for everything she bu and she returns, carefully balancing the glass tea and slices of bread that pass for breakfa With intense concentration, she lifts the steami glass to the old man's lips.

The reversal of roles is complete. She is mother and he is the child. She feeds him, wash

Nazeer and Hira share a simple meal (above) and the old man comforts his faithful companion

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away the grime from his face. Ever since she joined him on the pavement, he has never gone hungry. Whatever money she makes from begging or, occasionally, selling her body to strangers, goes into caring for the old man. She ensures that he eats thrice a day and never eats herself till he has finished. The residents call her mad for the sacrifice she has made but ignore the pleasure she gets from looking after the old man.

Vulnerable: Little is known about Hira and her background, except the fact that she was thrown out into the streets by her in-laws when her husband died. She is a Hindu and the old man is Muslim but that is hardly a barrier—if anything, it has brought them closer. So is the fact that he is blind and she is deaf. Obviously, the trauma of being suddenly thrown out into the streets without a paisa has affected her mental state. She is childishly naive and therefore vulnerable to the drunken or frustrated males who harass her continually. Her innate cheerfulness and flirtatiousness only encourage male attention. Most of the time, she ignores or laughs off advances, but occasionally she breaks down a cries in the old man's lap, and he mumbles wo of sympathy in a sudden reversal of roles.

The relationship is not all laughter and tea Often, when she is lured unsuspectingly away fr his side and into strange bedrooms, returning w a couple of rupees as payment, the old man w show anger and refuse to speak to her. But t anger is also tainted with despair. "What will s do after I am gone?" he laments.

But that is really immaterial in the kind mutual relationship they have. Both worry co tantly about being left by the other but they al know that only death will part them now. By no they have learnt to ignore the rude stares, the le gestures and the ribald comments. Not because is blind and she is deaf, but only because in t grime and filth of a Baroda pavement, they ha found and nurtured a companionship that tran forms their little world into almost ethereal br liance.

— DILIP BOBB with RAMESH MENON in Bar

Nazeer and Hira on the street (above) and together in a tender moment

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NEWSPAPERS

A Change Of Diet

The new dailies: swimming against the stream

NEWSPAPERING had never quite looked so much of a growth industry. Nor had the readers, fed on the changeless diet of old, complacent and well-circulated dailies, ever woken up to such a bonanza. Baffling the pundits who had all along been writing off English language readers as victims of a persistent necrophilia, a sudden media spring has swept the English Press.

In a span of four months, two broadsheet English dailies, *The Times of Deccan* from Bangalore, and *The Telegraph* from Calcutta, hit the stands in Bangalore and Calcutta, an event that had not happened at any metropolis since *The Indian Express* rolled out its first issue in Bombay in 1940. In fact the birth of the two English dailies followed a bleak interlude in which two other dailies, *The Mail* of Madras (started 1868) and the *Hindusthan Standard* of Calcutta (started 1937) had wound up in quick succession.

With *The Telegraph*, its publishers, the Ananda Bazar group, with a corporate turnover of over Rs 15 crore, has made up for the earlier ignominy it had to suffer in having to turn its *Hindusthan Standard* into a tabloid eveninger and then to close it down. However, *Hindusthan Standard* had never quite attempted to wrest the *numero uno* status in a region whose English reading habits had been long conditioned by two venerable centenarians — *The Statesman* and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. But *The Telegraph* has decided to take on the redoubtable *Statesman* (circulation of the Calcutta edition: 2,50,000) from the word go. Without hedging about his intentions, M.J. Akbar, 32, the editor and the group's omnipotent think-tank, said: "*The Telegraph* will eventually carve out readership from *The Statesman*, although initially certain overlapping of readership is inevitable. We have priced *The Telegraph* higher than *The Statesman*. We aim at 'quality' readership so that there is no 'wastage' for advertisers," adding that the latter "by choice has ceased to be a paper of national standing."

Far-sighted: Akbar's ambitious venture is a sequel to the group's long-term growth-and-modernization efforts, including a switch-over to offset printing and photo-typesetting. *The Telegraph* wears the sleek winning look largely because of its modern printing technology compared to the staid appearance of *The Statesman* which is composed on archival linotype machines and clanked out of a rotary press from its yellow-painted manorial fortress on Chowringee.

Quality-wise, however, the paper seems to be working overtime to look different by enlarging the socio-cultural beats and spending a lot of manpower and column lengths on direct reporting from national and international hot spots, Beirut included. The result has often been impressive rather than illuminating. Nor has it shaken *The Statesman*'s stoic aplomb, born out of the decades-old Bengali reverence for anything that *The Statesman* prints, including its clichés and its howlers. Said Amalendu Dasgupta, the 59-year-old editor of *The Statesman*: "People read us because ours is still the best paper. A former colleague, now dead, used to say that we've contemporaries, no rivals. It still holds good."

In Karnataka, T.J.S. George, 52, the goatee-bearded editorial director of the Hong Kong-based *Asiaweek*, began Bangalore's fourth English daily *The Times of Deccan*, with money from planters, a plain Jane look, and a rather modest claim of 16,000 circulation, miles behind the top daily *Deccan Herald*'s 1981 circulation of 1,13,000. *The Times of Deccan* obviously lagged way behind the times, with its biblical masthead, anaemic city reporting and rather shoddy style of writing. It was also dogged by rumours that Veerappa Moily, the Karnataka finance minister, had interests in its publishers—Karnataka Journal and Publications Limited. However, George denied the rumours and said cockily: "We are freer than any other newspaper."

Misplaced Cynicism: He also complained of lack of good staff ("Good English journalists have become a rare species in India"), but neither Akbar nor Vinod Mehta, editor of *The Sunday Observer*, last year's media sensation, seemed to confirm George's cynical observation. Akbar said he had hired 35 journalists for his daily, "all with new ideas", while Mehta said he had no problem in putting together an "excellent team". However, if any moral is to be drawn from *The Sunday Observer*'s success and the early expectancy *The Telegraph* has generated, it is the fact that no media breakthrough is now possible without a matching modernity in printing technique and without a youthful penchant for treading off the beaten path.

The periodicals scene too was dominated by the bulls, with *Malayala Manorama*, the most progressive of the southern newspaper empires, deciding to launch their new English weekly from Cochin by November this year, in time for the Asiad. This will be the *Manorama*'s (combined circulation of their daily: over 6 lakh) first tentative step away from its native Malayalam and into the tricky and pitfall-ridden sphere of the English magazine market.

Philip Mathew, 35, publisher and member of the Mathew family which owns the group, said: "It will be an all India newsmagazine, though it will fill the gap left by other magazines in reporting the south." The *Manorama*, with its sound regional roots, is obviously trying to snatch away the lead that *Sunday*, the Ananda Bazar group's weekly, has already established in the southern market by printing its issues in Madras simultaneously with Calcutta. But *Sunday*, already well-entrenched in the south with over 50,000 sales, may be too tough a bull to be sparred out of the ring easily.

New Confidence: Whatever may be the quality and market response of the new publications, there is no denying the fact that the newspaper industry is brimming over with a new confidence, with its cash registers jingling both at circulation and advertisement windows. Dr N. Bhaskara Rao, a private management consultant engaged by the Union Information and Broadcasting Ministry, computed last fortnight that the country's 250-odd newspapers had grossed Rs 250 crore worth in advertisements last year, a growth of 20 per cent over previous years. He estimated that 80 to 85 per cent of it went to large newspaper houses, the lynch-pins of the current media boom.

—SUMIT MITRA with bureau reports

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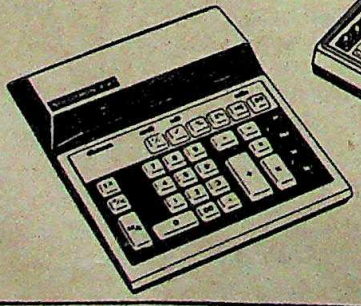

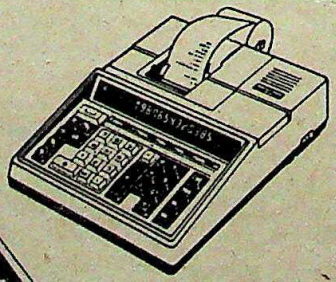

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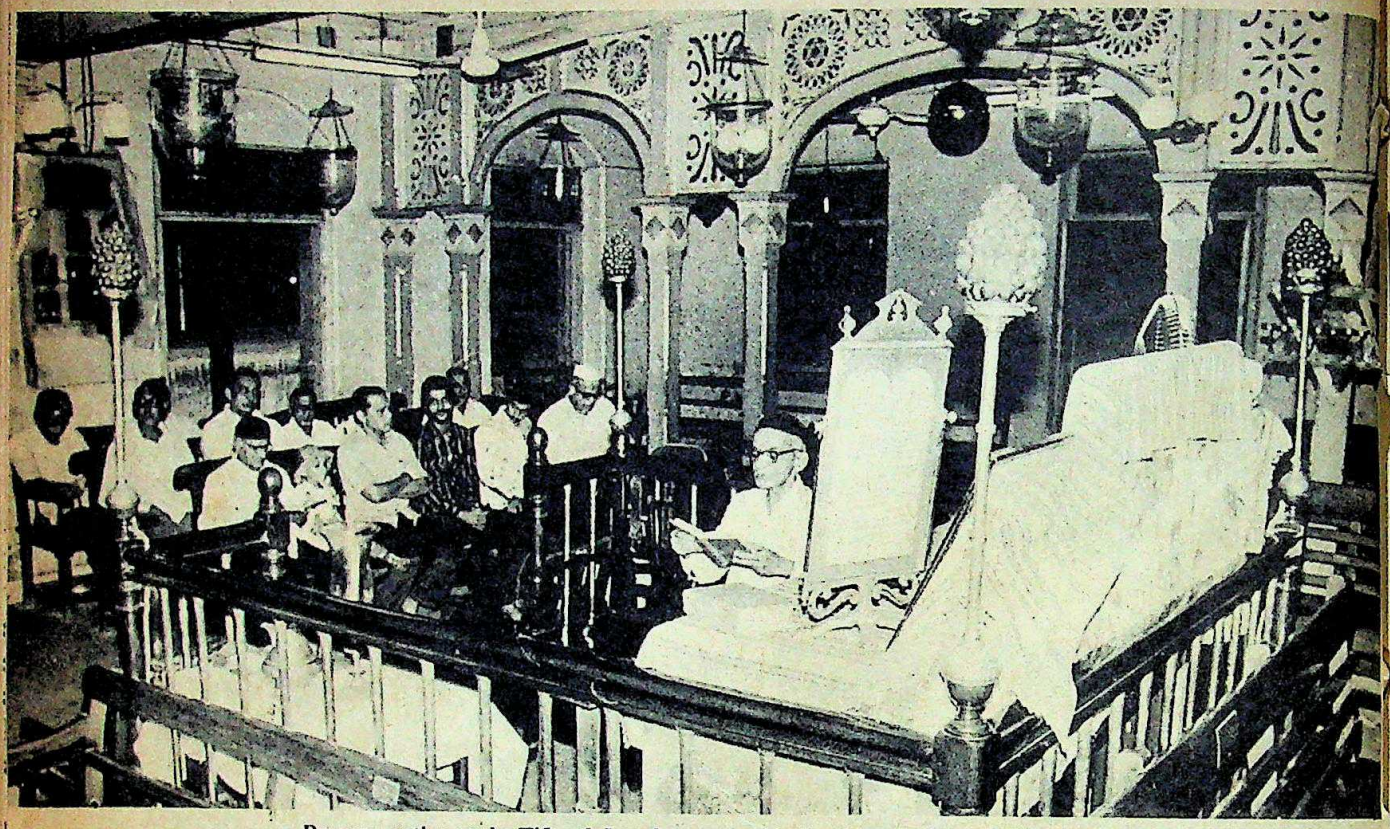

Prayer meeting at the Tifereth Israel synagogue in Bombay: free from discrimination

INDIAN JEWS

Caught In The Crossfire

INDIAN foreign policy has always suffered from contradictory tugs and pulls, and last month the Government exposed its tendency to over-react to global developments. Israeli Consul Yousuf Hasseen earned his expulsion with an outspoken interview with Bombay's Sunday Observer (INDIA TODAY, *July 31). But the subsequent announcement by Foreign Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao that India was studying the closure of the consulate is less easy to justify. It has also evoked a nervous reaction from India's miniscule Jewish community, whose principal contact with Israel has been the Bombay consulate.* INDIA TODAY *Correspondents* CHANDER UDAY SINGH *in Bombay,* CHAITANYA KALBAG *in New Delhi,* SREEDHAR PILLAI *in Cochin and* SUMANTA SEN *in Calcutta filed reports on the state of Indian Jews from which the following story is written.*

INDIAN Jews are in turmoil. Beset with uncertainty over last month's official pronouncements on Israel, they are worried that the expulsion of Consul Yousuf Hasseen and the threat to shut down the consulate altogether will rebound on them. Sam Abraham, a Bombay executive who doubles as secretary of the Central Jewish Board of India (CJBI), says many of his fellow Jews do not support what the Israeli consul did. "For 2,000 years we have lived in peace and harmony," he says, "what Hasseen said might jeopardise our position here." Adds another prominent member of the community in Bombay, "It is not fair to confuse Hasseen's actions with the need for a consulate. We have refused to accept at least one senior US diplomat because of his alleged CIA links, but this doesn't mean we close down their embassy."

Anxious not to say anything that might be misunderstood the Jews are nevertheless upset that the consulate may close down. Asks community leader S.S. Koder, 75, in Cochin: "If India is so upset by Israel's invasion of Lebanon, why wasn't the Soviet embassy in Delhi closed down when the Russians invaded Afghanistan?"

The episode is not without irony. For, unlike in so many other countries where Jews were forced to opt for Israel because of anti-Semitism, they faced not the slightest discrimination in India through centuries of existence. "Politically," says Ezra Kolet, president of the Jewish Welfare Association in Delhi, "we are totally loyal to India. But Israel has been a deeply emotional magnet." For the Jews, Israel represents the heroic culmination of a long and tragic history of persecution and bigotry. And, it has drawn from India legions of young people yielding to sentiment, religion and economic opportunity in the "Promised Land". From about 40,000 at the time of Independence, they number about 8,000 now, and the numbers are not increasing.

There is doubt about when exactly the first Jews came to India. The bulk of the community today consists of the Bene Israel (or Children of Israel) who number around 7,500 and are mostly settled in Bombay. Then there are the Cochini or Malabari Jews, whose enclave in Cochin today is a ghost of the old days, and whose inhabitants total only 46. Calcutta has around 140 Baghdadi or Iraqi Jews, and Delhi has only seven or eight families.

The Bene Israel believe that their ancestors came to the Konkan coast around 175 B.C., fleeing from Galilee where Greek over-

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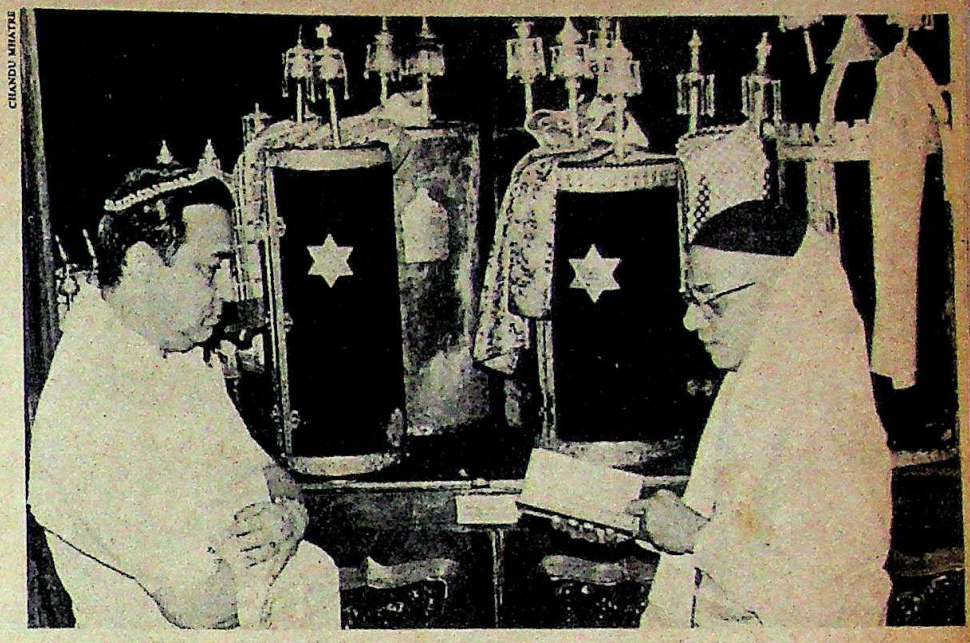


CHANDU MHATRE

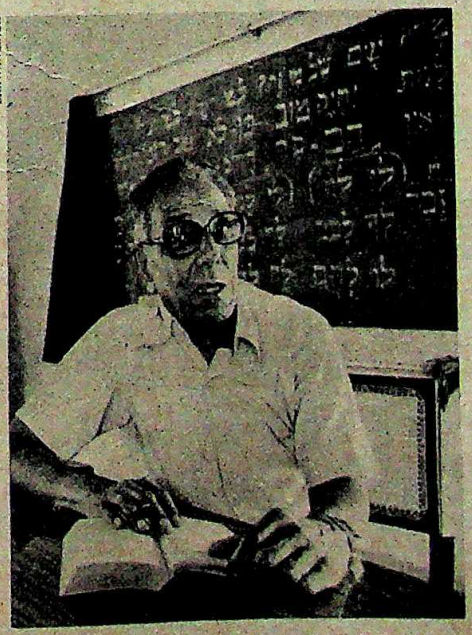
Entrance to the Cochin synagogue (left) and Sam Abraham with a Jewish priest reading from the Torah: strong emotional magnet

Hord Antiochus Epiphanes was oppressing the remnants of Israel's Lost Ten Tribes. The Cochin Jews traditionally trace their origins to 70 A.D., when Roman emperor Titus destroyed the Second Temple in Jerusalem. Calcutta's Baghdadi Jews in fact trace their origins to Baghdad and Basra in Iraq, Aleppo in Syria, and Yemen. The first settler in this category was Shalom ben Aaron ben Obadiah Ha-Kohen, who came to Bombay from Aleppo in September 1790, and moved to Calcutta in 1797 to build up a prosperous business.

The Baghdadi Jews even today are the most prosperous members of the community. In pre-1947 India, at least two families, the Kaduris and the Sassoons, ranked among the richest in the land. Sir David Sassoon's family left behind an industrial empire that includes the Sassoon Docks, the Raymond and India United Mills, and numerous hospitals, libraries, schools, synagogues and charitable institutions. Even well-known Bombay landmark Flora Fountain was named after his wife Lady Flora Sassoon. But there are differences among the various Jewish sects. The Baghdadis look down upon the Bene Israel, believing that the latter are not truly descended from the original Hebrew tribes, and have excluded them from sharing in or receiving the benefits of their charities.

Lifeless: Cochin's once-bustling Jew Street is now devoid of life; the only sight of an evening is old Jewish women sitting in the verandahs of their red-tiled houses, exchanging gossip about relatives in Israel. In recent years, parents of marriageable Jewish girls in Cochin have found that there is an acute shortage of boys. Says Koder, who owns a string of departmental stores and whose family accounts for one-third of the Cochinis: "We are finding it difficult to run our only functioning synagogue. There are only 10 men left over the age of 13." The Cochinis had to stop eating mutton and beef six years ago when their last Jewish butcher, Shoheth, migrated to Israel and they were deprived of *kosher* meat. Today, they have to fly *kosher* meat down from Bombay, and are perturbed that even their chicken butcher is planning to leave for Israel.

In Calcutta, there are almost no young Jews left: the average age today is around 55, and the community consists of ageing people who spend their evenings reading letters from relatives scattered all over the world. Most of them look forward to being buried beside their ancestors in the graveyard at Narkeldanga, a favourite Naxalite hide-out in the early 1970s.



BHAWAN SINGH

Kolet: "We are totally loyal to India"

The Calcutta Jews never really considered themselves Indians, and until the turn of the century spoke only in Arabic. The end of World War II saw a massive exodus from India; many Jewish girls married British and American soldiers and went away with them. Most Calcutta Jews migrated to Europe, Canada, and the US, and only recently have some of them, faced with discrimination in the United Kingdom, moved to Israel. Says Ellis Abraham, news editor of *The Statesman*: "We are very close to our families and naturally many parents left Calcutta to join their children who had settled abroad."

The Baghdadi Jews are very reluctant to comment on India's policies, *vis-á-vis* Israel, but they too are conscious that as a dwindling community, the closure of the consulate in Bombay would increase their loneliness. The wealthier Calcuttan Jews, like the Sassoons and the B.N. Elias family, have all moved abroad. Even the respected Rabbi Musleah, one of the last priests in the country, is now in the US, and today the richly decorated Eastern-style synagogue on Canning Street, surrounded by the din and bustle of commerce, attracts few worshippers.

The Jews' amicable co-existence with other communities is evident from the locations of their synagogues. Of the eight synagogues in Cochin, Cranganore and Ernakulam, only the Pardesi Synagogue in

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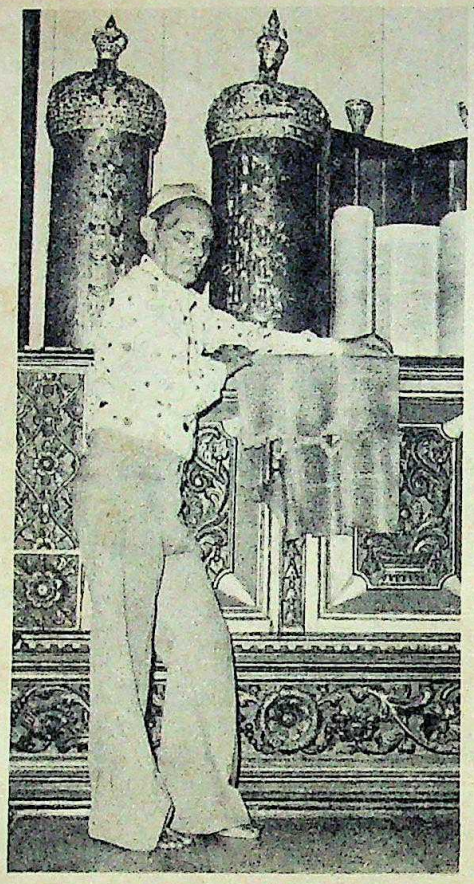
Mattancherry near Cochin functions today, and it is sandwiched between two mosques. In Bombay, most of the 11 synagogues are situated in predominantly Muslim areas like Dongri, Saat Rasta, and in Catholic Byculla.

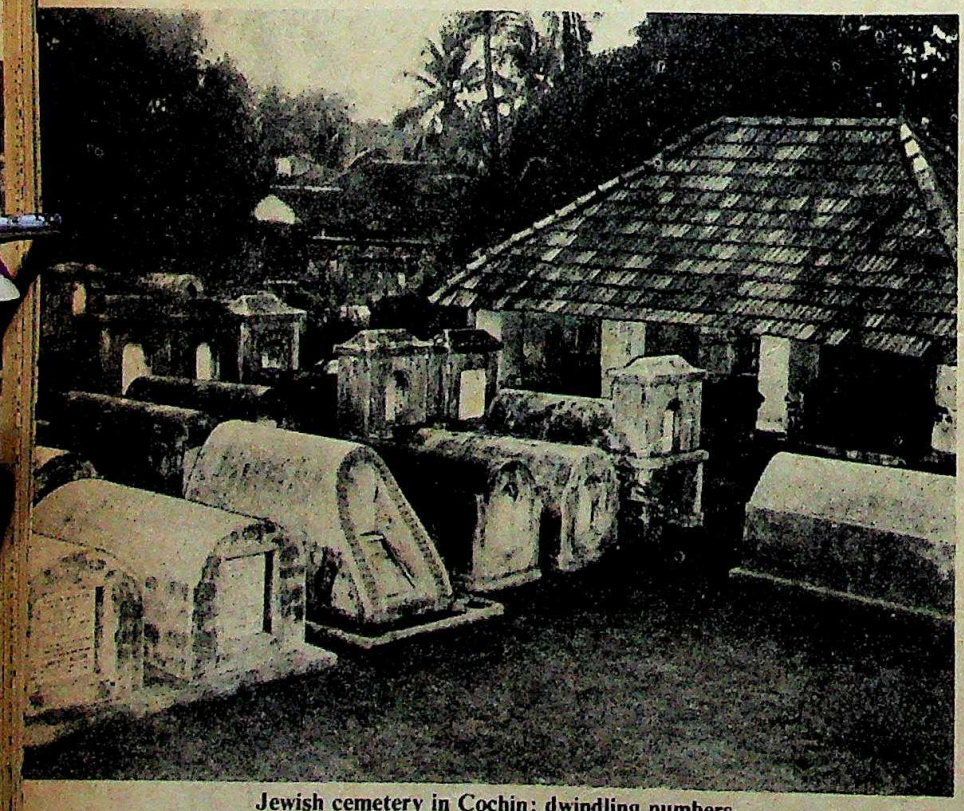
No Tension: Nowhere has there been the slightest tension between the Jews, who anyway maintain extremely low profiles, and other communities. Even in the semi-rural townships in Kolaba district, like Pen, Alibag, Poynad, Panvel, Janjira and Cheoul, the Jews have lived peacefully for centuries. The Bene Israel, in fact, speak Marathi, and because many of them practised the trade of oil-pressing, and observe the Jewish Sabbath on Saturdays, they are called the *Shanwartelis* (literally, Saturday oil-pressers).

Although reluctant to be quoted, most of the leading Indian Jews are of the opinion that the Israeli action in Lebanon stems from a deep-rooted instinct for preservation. "Because of its history," says Delhi journalist Jessica Jacob, "Israel may be behaving very aggressively and belligerently. But, intellectually speaking, I would tend to think that India should not burn its boats as far as Israel is concerned. We are surrendering our option to use persuasion and mediation, to play a larger role."

Many Indian Jews like Jacob have married outside their communities and even drifted away from their religious moorings, but the fact that they belong to the Sephardic



The oldest Torah in India at Cochin



Jewish cemetery in Cochin: dwindling numbers

(Spanish-Portuguese) stock has implied t many of them continue to be very orthod religiously. Kolet points out that a Jew boy has to read from the Torah (the Jew holy book) in Hebrew at the time of his *mitzvah*, and so the links with that anc language, too, are preserved.

Economically, it is advantageous Indian Jews to migrate to Israel. Althoug white-collar community with a very high of literacy, the Bene Israel in particular not affluent. The migrant to Israel, on other hand, is guaranteed housing, emp ment as soon as he learns Hebrew, and per cent discount on all "hardware" p chases like cars, refrigerators, television s

The Jewish Agency, which runs imm ration offices the world over, operates out a small office in the premises of Bomba Jewish Club, helping process would-be i migrants' applications, helping them t orientation courses, and even conduct vocational and technical classes. But Indi Jews often find themselves being discrim nated against in the Promised Land. In white paper to the World Jewish Congres the CJBI reports: "The discrimination t wards Indian Jews in Israel...has assum alarming proportions. Opportunities education and housing are denied or d liberately delayed, with the result that ther is constant friction between the Indian Je and the authorities."

Shock: The storm brewed by Yous Hasseen, therefore, has come all the more a shock to the Jews. What the *Times of In* editorially labelled "the vile and vicio conduct of the Israeli consul" has be perceived to have been a frank and blunt, undiplomatic, expression of Jewish feelin As Narasimha Rao demanded in the plena session of the Non-Aligned Coordinat Bureau's extraordinary meeting in Nicos on July 16, India is officially pressing for t isolation of Israel and is sending medici and other aid to the beleaguered Palesti Liberation Organisation (PLO) guerrillas West Beirut.

The paradoxes of the situation emerg when it was reported from Beirut that t Indian Ambassador, B.P. Agarwal, had mo ed to the 'safety' of Israeli-controlled E Beirut. Some of Delhi's Jews, for instanc pointed out that as late as July 23, the P Ambassador in Delhi Faisal Aweidah h strongly attacked Israeli intransigence Lebanon, and warned of a "new wave international terrorism". Aweidah justifi the terrorism as "revenge", but then reveng like the term "freedom of speech", has ma connotations. By raising the prospect shutting the consulate and eliminating the only contact with Israel, the Governme has only pushed the Indian Jews into defensive corner.

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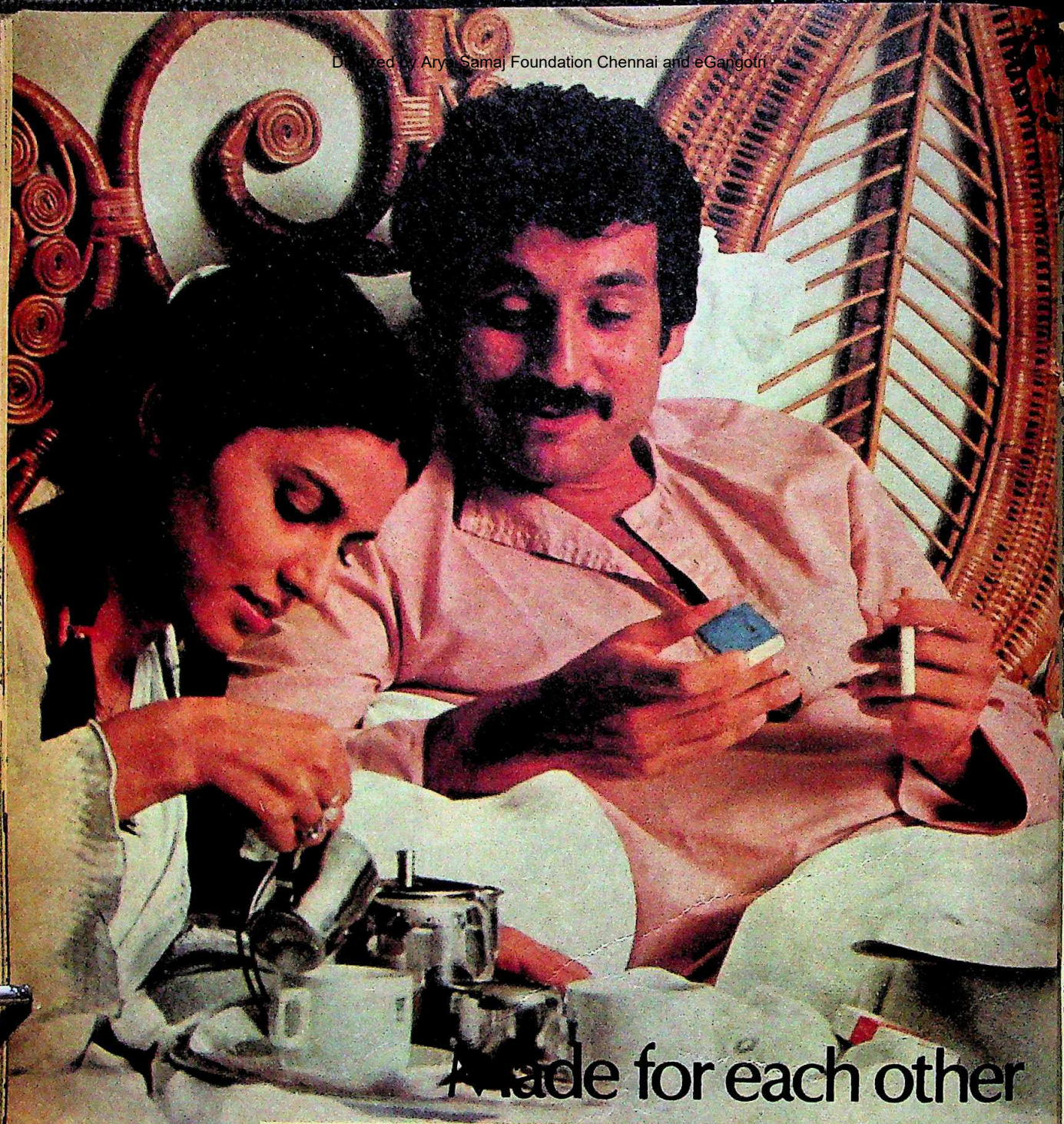

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SMUGGLING

Losing Control

THE LINE of Actual Control (LAC) slices the state of Kashmir into two halves, the one controlled by the Pakistani Army—Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK)—and the other, of course, Indian territory. The 1,200 km frontier is leaking badly: well-organised gangs and enterprising individuals ferry goods and information from one side to the other, their job considerably eased by the political patronage they enjoy. The over 100 spies and smugglers arrested since December 1980 are just a drop in the bucket and the two-way traffic is steadily increasing.

The connection between the smugglers and the politicians was thrown into stark relief last month in Rajouri, 150 km from Jammu, when police raided the house of Ghulam Hassan, who is the cousin of Choudhary Mohammad Hussain, a deputy minister in the state Government. The police discovered grenades and cartridges with Pakistani markings wrapped in cloth and concealed in a wall. Hassan explained the embarrassing find away by saying: "The grenades and cartridges smuggled in from POK had been kept by someone in my house while I was away in a pasture with my cattle." A senior police officer commented: "In fact, these very politicians—the rottenest of the rotten—are responsible for turning people into criminals when they are assured of an operation under political cover."

Chief Minister Sheikh Abdullah inspecting Pakistani arms recovered in a recent raid: two-way traffic

Large-scale Activity: The cases that have been broken and the criminals that have been arrested point to large-scale clandestine activity. A few examples:

► in July 1981, the arrest of a notorious felon, Ashok Kumar alias Binny, led to the arrest of a gang involved in spying, smuggling and kidnapping along the LAC in the Samba-Ramgarh sector in the Jammu division;

► in October 1981, the intelligence wing of the police, headed by Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of Police, CID, A.K. Kapoor, hauled in 31 persons, including seven Pakistani nationals. A large quantity of ammunition was seized, along with 18 Pakistan-made revolvers, nine pistols, one rifle, explosives and swords and daggers;

► on March 19, 1982, arms smugglers Abdul Hussain and Ayub were arrested in Poonch while they were carrying ammunition to the other side. This led to more revelations about three others: Hammed, a local teacher, Shafi, a National Conference party worker and Maqbool Shah, a double agent working for Pakistani intelligence and operating from Jandrot in POK;

► in April 1982, two Indian nationals spying for Pakistan in the Mendhar area in Poonch district, 300 km from Jammu, were rounded up soon after they were seen crossing the LAC;

► in May 1982, the crime branch succeeded in busting a gang of three brothers, Abdul Sattar, Makhmoor and Hayat, based in POK with their range of operations reaching up to Udhampur and Kathua districts. Says M.M. Khajooria, DIG crime and railways: "During interrogation, the accused made confessional statements for all the 13 heinous crimes they had committed. That includes murder, rape, abduction of women and cattle and robbery."

Isolated Area: The town of Poonch, barely 5 km from the border, is a veritable hotbed of smugglers, who capitalise on both armies' thirst for information to slip across the LAC. Says Govindram Thakur, a local journalist: "The whole town is within Pakistani shelling range and a battalion can enter it in one night using the Baitar rivulet. The resulting insecurity has meant that nobody invests in business here and the youngsters take to smuggling and spying." An intelligence official complains that Indian television cannot be seen in the town, Indian radio is inaudible—the idle soldiers watch Pakistan TV programmes every evening—and the telephones don't function properly. Says Khajooria: "It is mainly the isolation and helplessness of the local people which make them take to a criminal life."

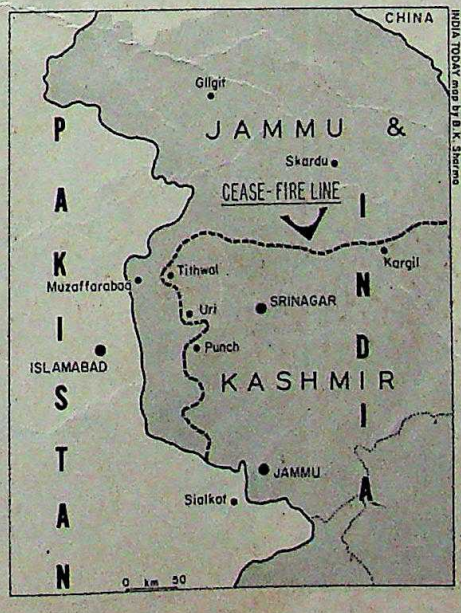
The articles smuggled out to Pakistan range from gold brocade and umbrellas to country liquor, or *tharra*, which is distilled in stills set up near the LAC in the Samba-Ramgarh sector—only recently, 2 lakh litres were destroyed by the police. The smugglers bring in imported cloth, electronic gadgets, small arms, plastic shoes mostly used by Gujjars living in the mountains, and finer brands of opium. Other articles in demand include silver, tea, shawls and sugar—out of India—and tin for pots and pistachio nuts—into India.

The trade in arms is thriving. The weapons, generally revolvers, are smuggled in by criminals for their personal use as well as for sale. Revolvers made in the Pakistan Defence Laboratory and Mumtaz Factory in Sylhet have been recovered in Delhi and Agra.

Good Deals: Earlier, the Pakistan Field Intelligence Unit used to feed arms clandestinely to Muslim areas of Poonch and Rajouri, but lately Hindu areas of Samba-Ramgarh have also been favoured.

With such a good deal being had by all concerned, it is not surprising that the leaks are slowly but steadily increasing, despite the best efforts of the police and security agencies to staunch the flow. If things continue like this, the LAC will soon have to be renamed, as nobody seems to be able to control the spies and smugglers flitting over and back with contemptuous ease.

—GHULAM NABI KHAYAL



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NEPAL

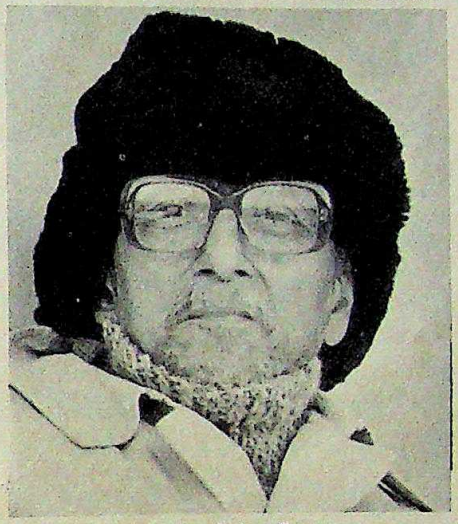
An Irreplaceable Loss

ALREADY faced by heavy odds, the future of parliamentary democracy in Nepal suffered a serious blow as its most vocal protagonist B.P. Koirala passed away in Kathmandu last fortnight. The end was inevitable, especially since doctors discovered early this year that cancer had spread to the lungs. What was most surprising was the ability of this towering personality to defy death in the face of insurmountable odds. As early as 1951, Koirala had been treated for cancer. But this, like so many aspects of the man, has only enhanced his 'larger than life' image.

Kathmandu reacted to the news of his death in a spontaneous outpouring of grief. Throngs of people had already gathered at the suburban residence of Koirala when his younger brother Girija Prasad Koirala announced from the first floor balcony at 7 p.m. on July 21 that "Koirala was no more". The funeral cortège that began at 3 p.m. the next day ambled through the heart of Kathmandu city before winding up at Arya Ghat at 8.00 p.m. on the banks of the Bagmati river only a stone's throw away from the temple of Pasupatinath.

The mammoth procession—the likes of which Kathmandu has not witnessed ever since King Tribhuvan's triumphant return from exile in 1951—was led by an open truck containing the body of the departed leader lying on a bed of flowers. Flanking Koirala were members of his family and long-time friend Chandra Shekhar of the Janata Party. By the time the cortège had reached New Road in downtown Kathmandu, the streets had turned into a sea of humanity. As *sindoor* and coins rained from the houses lining the route of the procession, chants of "Koirala is immortal. We shall fulfil his dreams", rent the air in a resounding crescendo.

Early Years: The Koirala saga began 68 years ago in the holy city of Varanasi where he was born in 1914. His early years were spent in the cauldron of pre-Independence India where the budding politician received the first lessons of power politics. Taking an active part in the Indian national movement, he was imprisoned twice in the early '40s. Soon after his release he organised the Nepali Democratic Party in December 1946, a movement that would eventually culminate in an armed insurrection against the feudal Rana regime in Nepal. "We bought arms from the Burmese Government and waited for their delivery in an airfield that had been improvised with torches for a night landing. When a DC-3 aircraft with no markings actually landed with the weapons, we were elated," recalls Ganesh Man Singh, who is now one of the three contenders for the party leadership.



Koirala: father figure

The funeral procession: outpouring of grief

But the highpoint of Koirala's political career came in May 1959 when he was sworn in as the first elected prime minister of Nepal. But the triumph was short-lived. In the wake of growing criticism against the fledgling government of Koirala, King Mahendra dissolved the Parliament, and imprisoned the prime minister in December 1960. Nepal's experiment in parliamentary democracy had come to an abrupt and unceremonious end.

Eight years of incarceration in a Kathmandu jail followed by eight years of exile in India appear to have left indelible scars on Koirala's psyche and health. Soon after Mrs Gandhi's return to power, he returned to Nepal only to face charges of treason and more imprisonment. He was eventually acquitted of these charges. When King Birendra made the historic announcement of a referendum to decide the system of government in May 1980, it appeared as if history would do justice to Koirala and he would again assume the mantle of leadership in Nepal.

But as subsequent events proved, that was not to be. The multi-party system lost the referendum by a margin of less than 9 per cent. Critics of Koirala blamed the defeat on his refusal to form a united front against the Panchayat system. "In accordance with democratic norms, I accept the verdict of the referendum, however unexpected and inexplicable it may be," was Koirala's reaction to the defeat.

Conservative Influence: In spite of the political misfortunes of the last few years Koirala stuck to his theme of national reconciliation and his belief that monarchy had an important role to play in contemporary Nepal. He expressed his antipathy towards radicals in no uncertain terms and of late he had been showing considerable concern at burgeoning influence of foreign powers in miniscule Nepal. "Now that Koirala the cushion, the moderating influence is no more, there is a likelihood of radical oppositionists coming to the forefront," says a political analyst in Kathmandu.

There are already rumours of an impending split in the ranks of the banned Nepali Congress along

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ethnic lines, although it appears as if the party will be run by the triumvirate of Ganesh Man Singh, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai and Girija Prasad Koirala. How long the three can contain the enthusiasm of the younger party members who have been denied the spoils of power for so long is anybody's guess. None of the members of the troika possess the kind of charisma and universal respect that Koirala enjoyed in his lifetime.

Koirala's death no doubt signals a major watershed in Nepalese history. "One could feel an extraordinary light coming from that man. He is irreplaceable," effuses Theodore Riccardi of Columbia University, a scholar on Nepalese history. Reflecting this sentiment the question that most Nepalese were asking last fortnight was: Koirala the man is dead, but will Koirala the idea live on?

—ASHOK R. PANDEY in Kathmandu

PAKISTAN

A War Of Words

WHATEVER the restraints imposed by Pakistan's censorship laws, they have certainly not deterred the country's leading newspaper groups from going at each other's throats. By last month, the sound and fury of the battle of words among the two traditional rivals—the Karachi-based *Jang* group and Lahore's *Nawa-i-Waqt* had reached a hysterical crescendo when the *Jang* group published a hard-hitting editorial against *Nawa-i-Waqt* accusing it of having challenged the Government machinery of the Audit Bureau of Circulation by levelling charges of corruption against it. The editorial also challenged the claims of *Nawa-i-Waqt* as the "largest circulated daily in the country" and demanded that the slogan be deleted from the masthead. *Jang*'s eveninger, *Daily News*, added more fuel to the fire by publishing stories against the rival group calling it a "hypocrite and a so-called moralist."

The *Nawa-i-Waqt* has so far kept mum on this issue. But the group has been on the offensive on other fronts. It first got the pages of *Jang* restricted to 80. But the most severe blow came later when the *Nawa-i-Waqt*, in collusion with the Haroon group, got all the colour film pages of daily newspapers closed down by an agreement between the Government and the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) which is dominated by Majeed Nizami and Hameed Haroon, sympathisers of the two groups. *Jang* was the only newspaper in Pakistan which cashed in on glamour colour spreads of actresses and other women of prominence.

The mast-heads of *Nawa-i-Waqt* (above) and the *Jang*: sound the fury

Predictably, the *Nawa-i-Waqt* welcomed the Government's decision in an editorial in which it pointed out that the problem was created by the *Jang* of Lahore which, it said, had started the exploitation of women in its pages to attract readers' attention. The *Jang* hit back by charging the *Nawa-i-Waqt* with massaging the page restriction and the ban on film editions.

Tension: The tension between the two leading groups—*Jang*, the symbol of independent thought and *Nawa-i-Waqt*, known for its 'boldness' in times of national crisis—first surfaced in 1979 when the *Nawa-i-Waqt* started a Karachi edition to try to break the monopoly of Mir Khalil-ur-Rahman's *Jang*. *Jang* countered by bringing out a Lahore edition with government support. But once the *Nawa-i-Waqt* had come to terms with the Government *Jang*'s Lahore venture was sidelined till September that year. But once it got going, under the editorship of Shakil-ur-Rahman, *Jang*'s circulation shot up at a rapid pace, threatening the rival publication.

Nawa-i-Waqt challenged the circulation figures of *Jang* and hit out at the Information Ministry's Audit Bureau of Circulation and said that it could be "bought with money to exaggerate the circulation figures." In their avid campaign to humble a rival publication, *Nawa-i-Waqt*'s Majeed Nizami and Hameed Haroon were elected as president and secretary-general respectively of the APNS. Nizami, in a press statement, declared that the *Jang* had refused a nominated post on the executive committee of the APNS.

The high point of the groups rivalry came in the wake of a story published in the *Jang* papers on the proceedings of a student court held by the Punjab University Students Union in which the 'court' was told that the *Nawa-i-Waqt* was "the paper of the establishment." The report also stated that during the proceedings, it was also charged that the *Nawa-i-Waqt* took Rs 20 lakh from the Bhutto government as advertisement in advance for writing in favour of Bhutto's constitutional amendments initiated in 1979. The charge was promptly denied by the *Nawa-i-Waqt* which issued a legal notice to the *Jang* management seeking 'unqualified apology' for publishing this 'false and untrue story. If no apology was made, it threatened to sue the *Jang* group to the tune of Rs 10 million.

The high pitched battle between Pakistan's two major groups is likely to continue for some time to come, much to the delight of the readers.

—QUTUBUDDIN in Karachi

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NTELLIGENCE BUREAU

Of Political Bondage

THERE are currently two PIB's operating in the country. One, of course, is the Press Information Bureau, the official mouthpiece of the Government *vis-à-vis* the media. The other PIB, though still officially acquire the acronym, is the Political Intelligence Bureau, which is what India's largest intelligence agency, the Intelligence Bureau (IB) has been reduced to in the recent past. According to top-level sources in the organisation, there are no less than 400 IB operatives throughout the country currently engaged in monitoring the activities of just two individuals—Maneka Gandhi, 26, the recently estranged daughter-in-law of the Prime minister, and her second-in-command, Akbar (Dumpy) Ahmed.

One lot of operatives are engaged in round-the-clock surveillance of Maneka, Ahmed and their known associates, while a similar number have been requisitioned to tap the phones of the same people and listen to all conversations, however trivial. But the largest number of operatives have been spending the last three months frantically trying to find out who, if any, are Maneka's financial backers. The orders for the Maneka probes came directly from the prime minister's house.

Political Tools: The sources have also confirmed that at any given time there are an incredible 70 per cent of IB field operatives engaged in collecting political intelligence on opposition parties and leaders; this despite the fact that under the Constitution collection of political intelligence by the IB is illegal. With a majority of the IB's 13,000 employees really operating as the political intelligence wing of the ruling party, it is hardly surprising that the IB's real job—counter-intelligence—has been blatantly ignored.

There can, tragically, be no better indication of this than the fact that in the last three years hardly any major spies have been arrested or any major spy rings busted by the IB. "Does the Government really expect the public to believe that Pakistan, China and Bangladesh have signed a pact to stop all spying activities in India?" quips an IB source.

In fact, the sources confirm that apart from the massive number of field operatives engaged in collecting political intelligence for the ruling party, at least 90 per cent of the work done at IB headquarters is of a political nature. The IB's phone tapping operations have expanded enormously in recent years and are now an accepted and major part of the organisation's functions. In addition, according to the sources, the IB has become the private army of not just the Central leadership but of the state Congress(I) leaders as well.

Party chief ministers have regular meetings with those senior IB officials at the Delhi headquarters who belong to their state cadre to update their secret files on major opposition leaders and also, in many cases, to brief themselves adequately before meeting the prime minister to discuss state affairs. Apart from the fact of the constitutional illegality,

There are no less than 400 IB operatives throughout the country currently engaged in monitoring the activities of just two individuals—Maneka Gandhi, and her second-in-command, Akbar (Dumpy) Ahmed.

what is equally repugnant is the obvious fact that the IB's annual budget of Rs 6 crore—apart from its secret budget of a similar amount (which is all taxpayers' money)—is being spent on spying for the ruling party.

Precedents: Not that the Congress(I) is solely to blame for the present state of affairs. The Janata Party used, or rather misused, the IB even more, not only because of the number of political elements involved in its ill-fated grouping, but also because its leaders demanded intelligence reports and surveillance on each other apart from that on Mrs Gandhi and her party. A senior official, during Charan Singh's caretaker period, received two orders for information. One came from the caretaker prime minister Charan Singh himself who wanted information on the moves of the then acting home minister, Y.B. Chavan, whom he suspected of making overtures to Mrs Gandhi. The other set of instructions came from Chavan, then in charge of the IB (since it comes under the Home Ministry), asking for information on Charan Singh!

Even Morarji Desai—that great moralist and conscience-keeper of the nation—was fully aware of what the IB was up to. According to an official who was present on the occasion, Desai demanded to see the IB's phone tapping wing and was taken around and told exactly whose phones were being tapped. He, of course, made no comment, but neither did he order the IB to curtail or discontinue their operations.

THE SOURCES confirm that the politicisation of the IB really started in 1967. Their first major political operation was when a communist government was formed in Kerala in 1967, and overnight truckloads of files containing information embarrassing to the Congress Party were shifted from Trivandrum to New Delhi. The cost: Rs 10 lakh.

Inevitably, the IB's misuse is total in the months preceding elections. IB sources allege that during the 1977 general elections they were ordered to try and influence as many legislators as they could in Delhi and in the states to support the Congress(I). More recently, the IB had at least 1,000 operatives, most of them in Haryana, trying to collect intelligence on the electoral prospects in the states that had a mini-general election last May. So blatant is the politicisation of the organisation that it actually has a joint director in charge of elections whenever one comes around. In 1977, for instance, the joint director (elections) was none other than T.V. Rajeshwar, the present director of the IB. Rajeshwar did not deny the IB's political role when he spoke to INDIA TODAY last week, apart from saying that the scope of IB's function is "very nebulous". Neither did he categorically deny that IB was collecting information on Maneka. "We don't do obvious things like following people around. Our methods are far more sophisticated," he says.

Disillusioned Employees: Currently, however, Rajeshwar—a soft-spoken, grey-haired individual—has a more immediate problem to deal with, namely: the simmering discontent in the organisation that led to the formation of an Intelligence Bureau Employees' Association (IBEA).

The IBEA, which claims the support of 10,000 of the IB's 13,000 employees, had protested against the administrative drawbacks that included ad hoc transfers, promotions and promotional bottlenecks and

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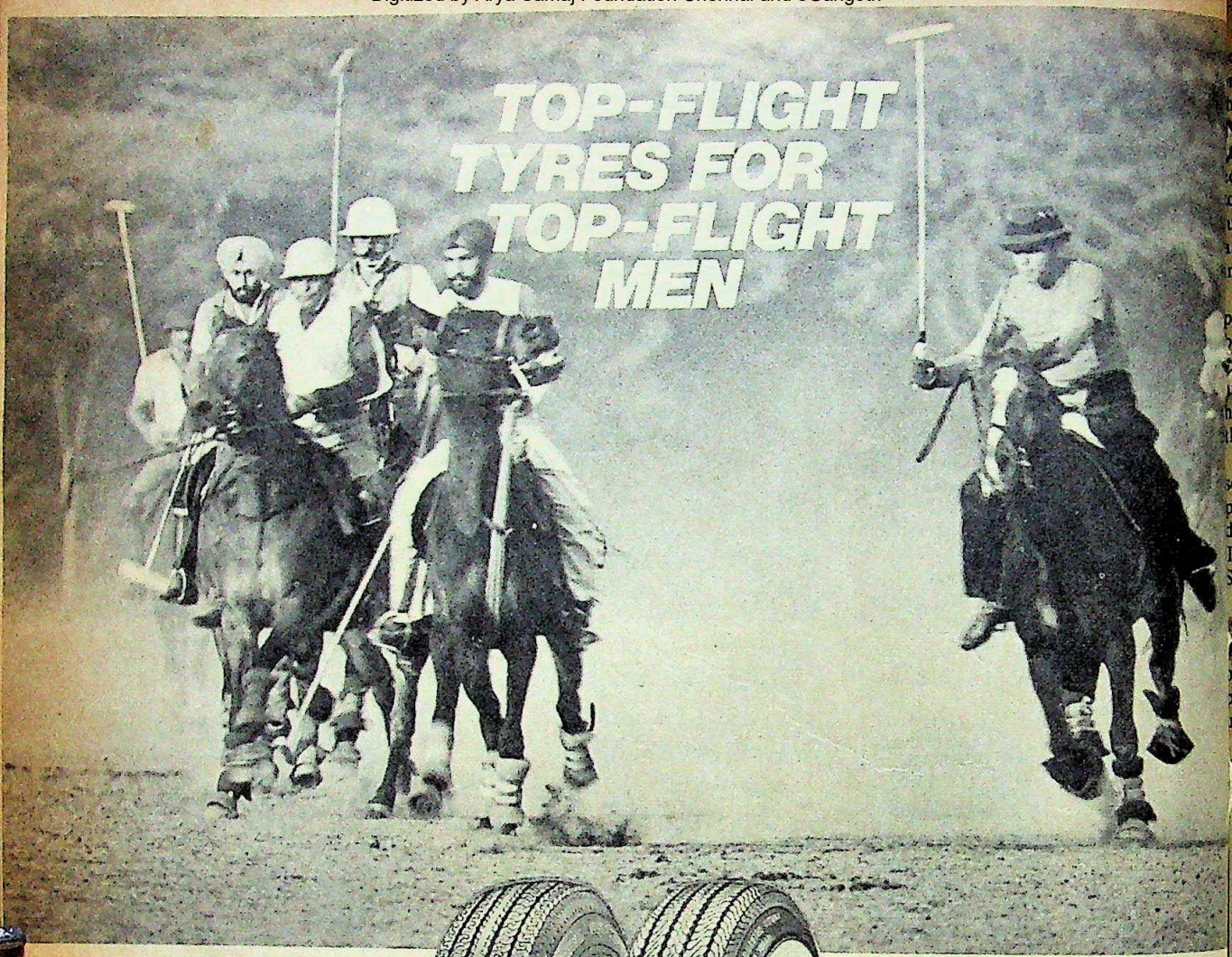

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epotism by the coterie of 50-odd IPS officers n deputation to the bureau who are all at he top level. Four senior IB employees, the ringleaders of the IBEA, were dismissed and ubsequently they took the matter to the ourts. Next fortnight, the Supreme Court is cheduled to hear the case and pass its udgment. The IBEA is confident that it will be favourable one, since legally there is noth- ng against forming a union.

But the IPS coterie has retaliated in predictable fashion and several stories have been "leaked" to the leftist press in recent weeks accusing the IBEA of being financed and supported by the inevitable "foreign hand" which, in this particular case, implies the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

IBEA spokesman, however, are not amused at the charges. Says one: "We are as patriotic as anybody else and this just indicates the desperation of the IPS officials. They are worried that they might lose the Supreme Court case."

Infighting: Last fortnight, a circular was issued to all IBEA members asking them to provide specific instances of "delayed action or suppression of representations relating to promotion, confirmation, seniority etc; misuse of official position, personnel or vehicles; discrimination between various staff members in payment of various allowances and any other action that smacks of victimisation...". The idea is to prepare a white paper of the IB's "black deeds" and present them personally to the prime minister.

A previous white paper compiled by the IBEA and sent to the prime minister through normal channels obviously never reached her since nothing was done and no reply received. Obviously, the impression given to her is that the IBEA is a bunch of malcontents bent on creating trouble. But what it all really boils down to is a battle between the IPS cadre, who control the organisation (Rajeshwar is an IPS deputationist from Andhra Pradesh) and the direct recruits.

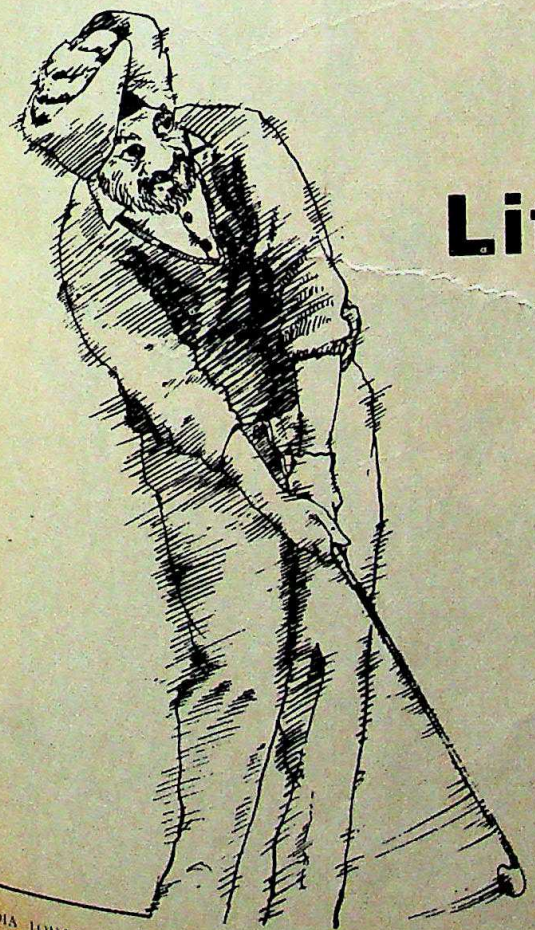
Dirty Tactics: Already, the battle has broken out into the open with the IB indulging in mass transfers of people suspected of being IBEA leaders. Recently, 70 operatives were transferred to the north-east. Only four of them managed to get their transfer orders revoked at the personal request of ex-President Sanjiva Reddy. IBEA spokesmen allege that the transfers are being made to demoralise the organisation.

One instance cited is that of T.G.M. Pillai, the IBEA unit secretary, Bhopal, who was asked to proceed to Shillong in total violation of any rational transfer policy. In another case, M. John, a Class IV employee (the lowest level in the IB) and assistant treasurer of the IBEA in Kerala, was given transfer orders even though an employee at that level belongs to a decentralised cadre and thus is not eligible for transfer. In John's case, however, the ministry intervened and stopped his transfer.

Rajeshwar admits that there is a problem of promotions but not one that cannot be resolved. "The fact that Shankaran Nair has been appointed to undertake a cadre review means that the government is aware of the problem".

The result of the internecine war is that the IB is using its 'loyal' sleuths to actually spy on the IBEA and report on its activities, which indicates the depths that the organisation has reached. With IB operatives spying on their own colleagues and virtually the entire organisation involved in spying on the Opposition—and also on a 26-year-old widow—the IB may as well issue foreign spies a gilt-edged invitation to India where the spying is easy and the chances of getting caught almost non-existent.

—DILIP BOBB



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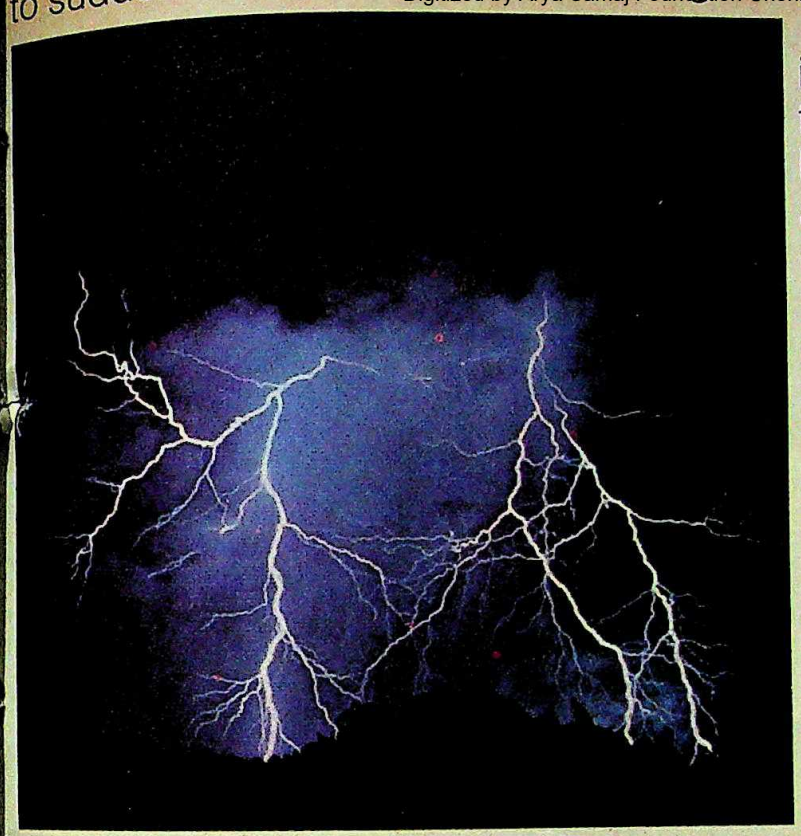

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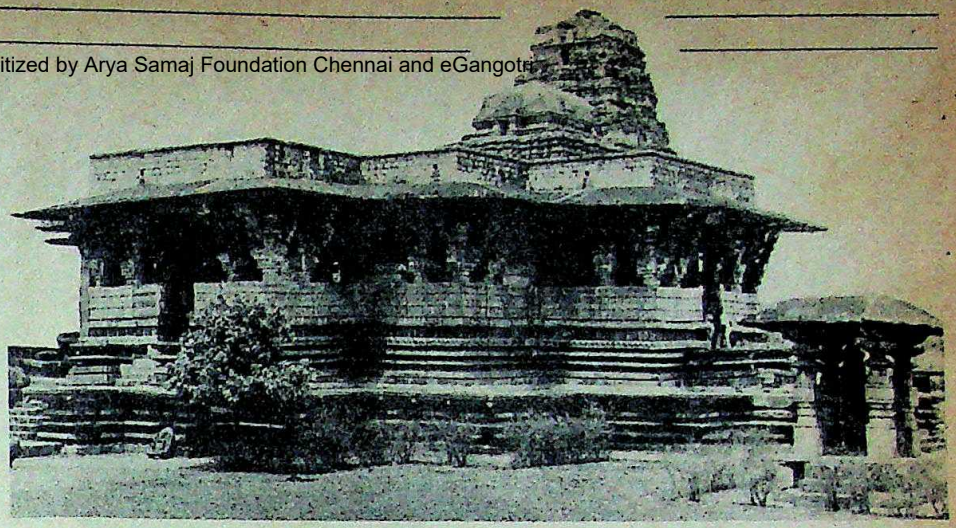

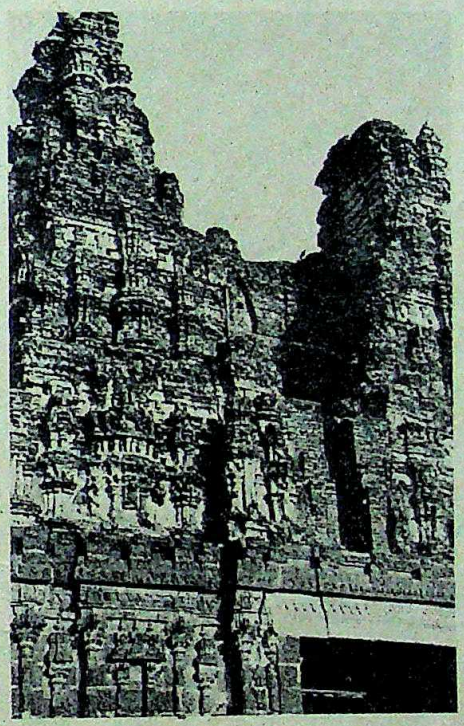

The Ramappa temple (above) and a sculpted *gopuram* of the Venkataramana temple: ownership tussle

EMPLE trustees in Andhra Pradesh have an insatiable appetite. The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam TD) which manages the Venkateswara te- the richest in the country, is now oeuvring to get five ancient temples, luding the Ramappa and Lepakshi sh- es, transferred from the Archaeological vey of India (ASI) into its fold. The ensible reason: the utility and popularity these temples are declining because they still on the list of protected monuments.

At a recent meeting of the TTD Board, Andhra Pradesh Hindu Religious dowments Commissioner P.S. Raja- pala Raju suggested the transfer so that ple festivals and rituals of worship can be anced and revived. Says he: "Sentiments the local people for making the temples pular by reviving the *pujas* and *sevas* are h. TTD can easily step in for it has both men and money for adopting and manag- these temples."

Currently, the TTD manages 15 temples luding one in far away Rishikesh. For the t time, however, the modern temple nagers are grabbing at temples on the otected list. Explains Raju: "Temples as numents attract tourists, but regular wor- p and festivals will bring a large number devotees."

Archaeologists, fearing ulterior motives moved from religion, oppose this move. As e ASI official says: "These temples as numents are meant to remain as tes- mony of the Kakatiya and Vijayanagar pire builders and not 20th century official- m." The five temples are outstanding amples of Hindu religious art with ex- isite paintings, sculptures and historic chitecture. The oldest is the 800-year-old mappa temple in Warangal. It is the best own of the Kakatiya temples with de- rative pillars, exquisitely carved ceiling d the celebrated figures of dancers and usicians.

Splendid Sculpture: The four other te- ples were built during the later period of e Vijayanagar rule. These were listed as numents for their unique blend of ar- itecture and sculpture and are characteris- for their sculpted *gopuras* (spires). The st important of these is the Veerabhadra mple at Lepakshi with its bold sculpture d beautiful paintings. Other temples are e Ramalingeswara and Venkataramana at Tadpatri and the Kodandaramaswamy at Vontimitta.

Customary worship on a limited scale is allowed in these temples without hampering conservation. But in practice, the managers of these temples charge an entry fee flouting ASI rules, colour the walls in alternate white and ochre bands and touch up the floors and walls with mosaic slabs and glazed tiles, disregarding totally conservation practices suggested by the ASI. The ASI, on its part, is charged with neglecting the cracked walls, broken lintels, the incomplete Kalyana Mantapa at Lepakshi, the perilously perched *gopuras* at Tadpatri and the sinking Ramappa temple.

Naturally, the TTD has used this as ammunition to support its demand to transfer the temples to its charge. ASI officials, however, are stubbornly sticking to their guns. "It's like suggesting the Venus De Milo should be given her missing arms," says an archaeologist.

But the ASI faces two tough odds—insufficient expertise at times and inadequate finances more often. For example, the manufacture of bricks of the right texture to match the light, spongy floating bricks used in the Ramappa temple is still to be mastered. Such problems are inevitable but money available for conservation is shockingly low. The ASI can afford to spend only Rs 1 lakh of a total of Rs 4 lakh it gets annually for conservation in Andhra Pradesh to take care of the 145 protected monuments. A major chunk of the money is spent on museums.

Poor Finances: The lack of sufficient funds makes the ASI overly vulnerable to the current pressure to hand over more temples to organisations like the TTD. Meanwhile, political pressure seems to be building up in favour of the transfer proposal. State Endowments Minister. P.V. Choudhry told INDIA TODAY: "These temples are a monument to man's neglect. The ASI has a budget of Rs 70 lakh for the whole country. Obviously, they cannot do much."

With the financial and political factors certain to play a major role in the fate of the temples, it appears that the TTD empire is about to be expanded, even though the ASI's idea of conservation and restoration work is markedly different from the so-called modern ideas and methods used by the Endowments Department and TTD officials. Obviously, throwing open the temples to worshippers and devotees has considerable popular appeal. But the ASI, perhaps justifiably, feels that the temples would lose their historical value and could be exploited for commercial ends if the TTD takes over. Whichever way the temple tussle is resolved, the 20th century seems to have finally caught up with India's religious heritage.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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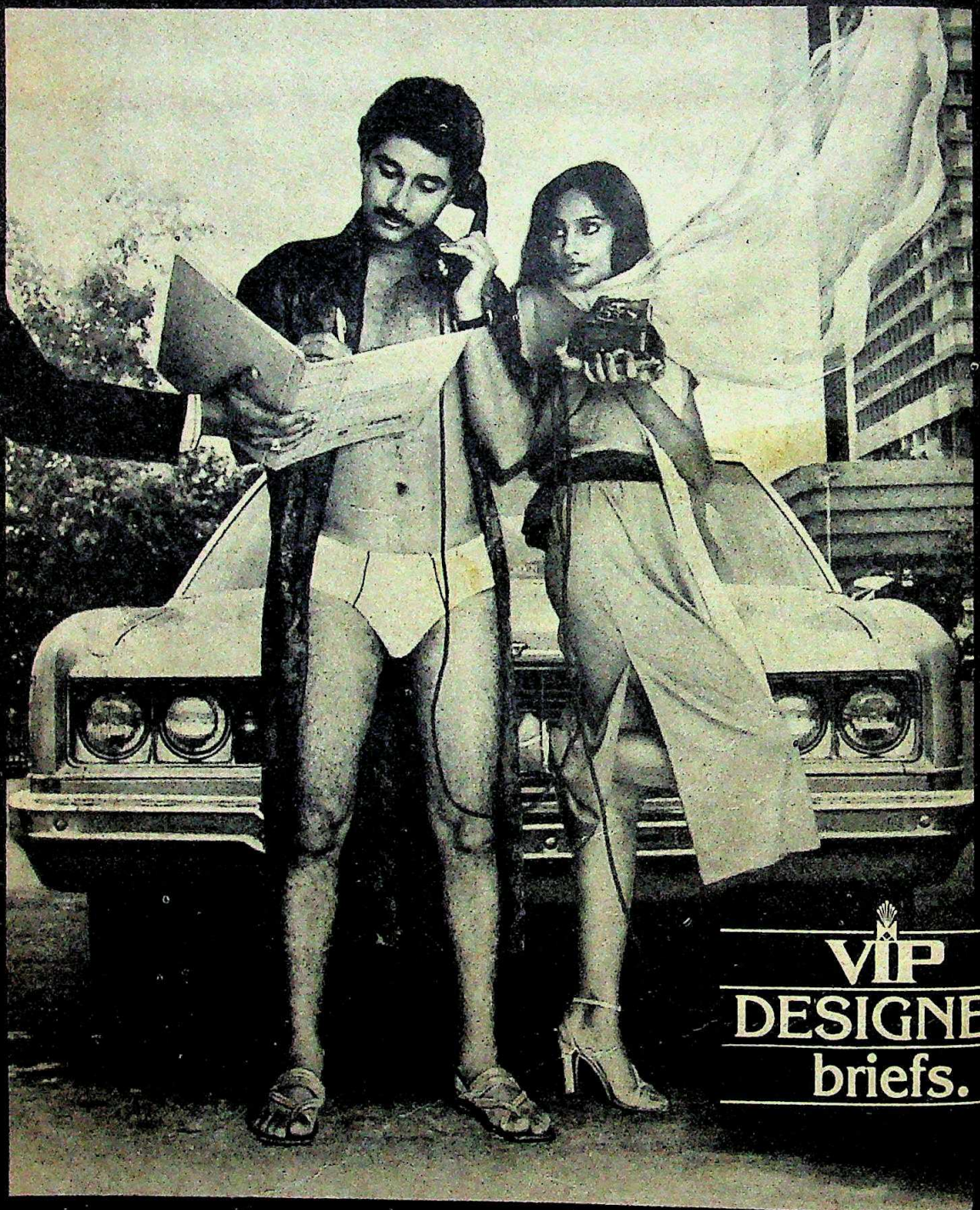

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DARBHANGA

An Heir Splitting Legacy

THE STORY is as complicated as the whorls on a fingerprint, a ready-made screen-play bursting with grandeur, feudalism, pretension, and the tattered remnants of pomp and panoply. The theatre of this absurd epic, Raj Darbhanga in Bihar, has been reduced today to a threadbare relic of the fiefdom's old glory.

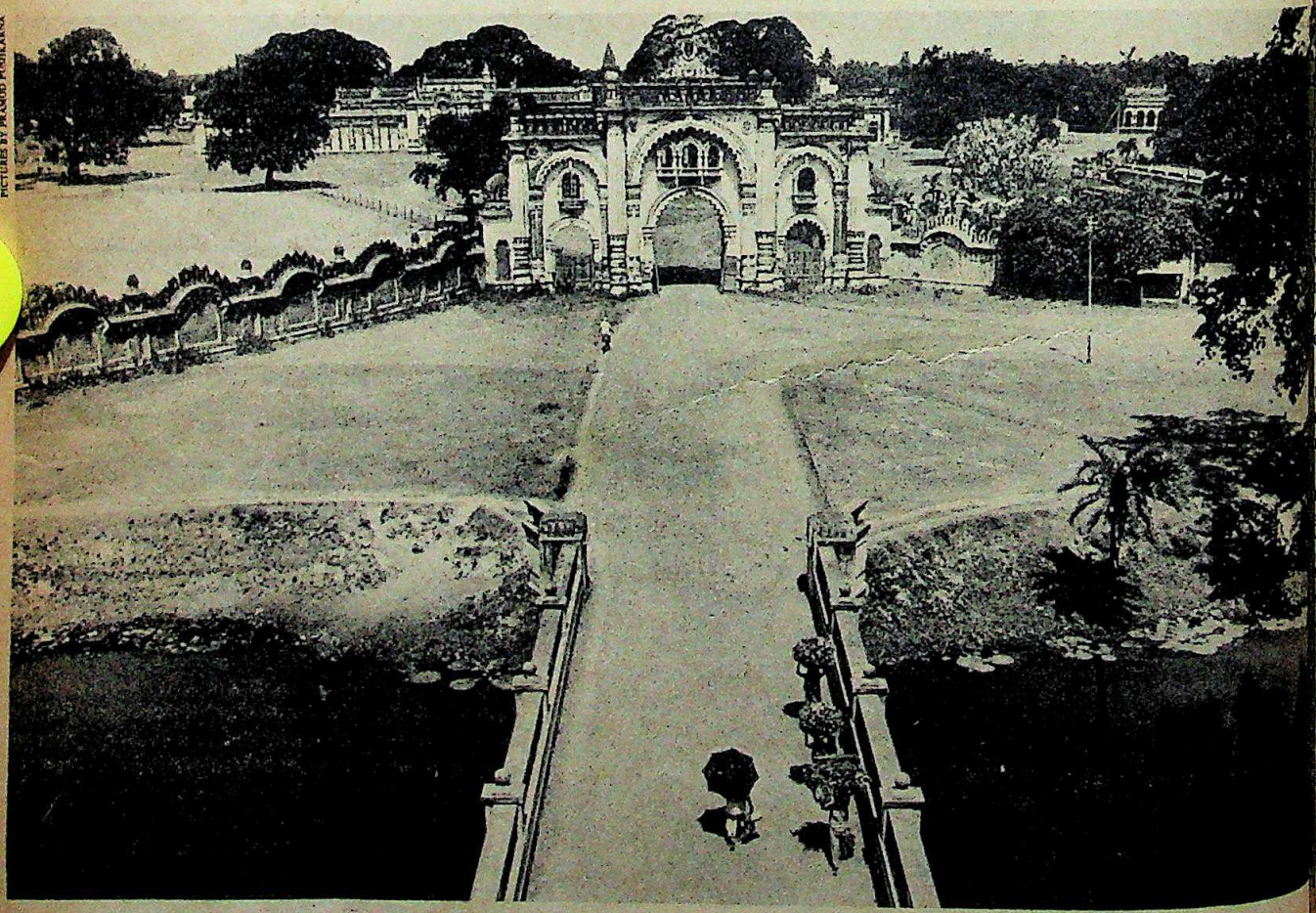
Darbhanga was once India's largest private land holding, a huge swathe of property that stretched from the Gandak in the west to the Kosi, in the east, and from the Himalayan foothills in the north to the Ganga in the south. Today, it has shrunk to a few palaces in Darbhanga town, 200 km north-east of Patna, property in a few other cities, and a rapidly diminishing treasury.

At the centre of the storm sweeping Darbhanga's remnants before it is the Falstaffian figure of Subheshwar Singh, 36. Youngest nephew of Maharaja Sir Kameshwar Singh Bahadur, KCIE, the last ruler of Darbhanga who died in October 1962, Subheshwar is pitted in a grim legal battle for control of the estate against the youngest and only surviving wife of the maharaja, Kamasundari Devi, 53.

Relentless Campaign: The quarrel erupted into the headlines earlier this year when Kamasundari's cause was championed by an unlikely candidate: Jagannath Mishra, chief minister of Bihar. Mishra had more than altruism in mind; Subheshwar happens to be managing director of Newspapers and Publications Limited, which owns two of the biggest newspapers, *Indian Nation* *Aryavarta*.

The two papers had been wa relentless campaign against Mishra' government. Seizing upon staff disc and the management's failure to imp the Palekar tribunal's wage awards fo nalists, Mishra subtly harassed Subh by slashing government advertisemen fomenting more trouble. Subheshw taliated by threatening to enter (INDIA TODAY, February 28) and Mi turn said he had received report Subheshwar had plotted to kill the ma

Neither side was guiltless, but th has worsened in the following m Styling themselves leaders of the Shr sect of Brahmins, the Darbhanga rule for generations patronised their Subheshwar, who was financing M Brahmin Mishra's politics, withdre support, and Mishra reportedly ord



PICTURES BY PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Maharaja Kameshwar Singh (top) and the ornate gateway to the palaces: a fiefdom in tatters

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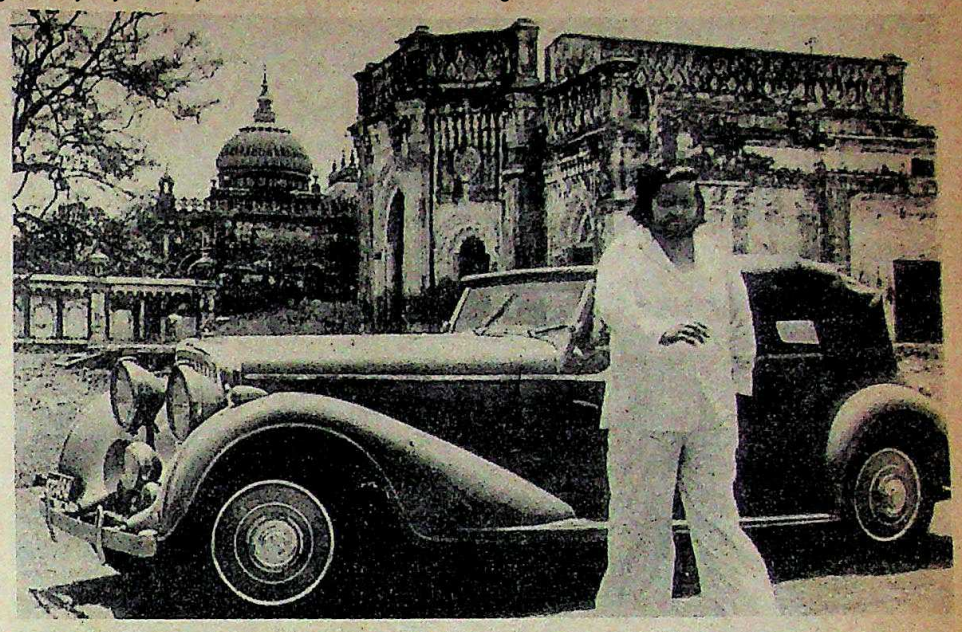

Subheshwar with his 1932 Bentley: centre of the storm

ntral Bureau of Investigation (CBI) inquiry find out what Subheshwar had done with estate's awesome wealth, and why he ed to file financial returns for the estate.

The bulk of the Darbhanga wealth is inistered by a three-member trust, and masundari's spokesmen allege that bheshwar, in connivance with the trustees, steadily eaten into the estate's vitals. ce estimated at a fabulous Rs 500 crore, h real estate in Bihar and major Indian es, a string of companies, and property in gland and Switzerland, much of the Darga wealth was slashed by the Zamindari olition Act of 1950. When the maharaja d in 1962, estate and wealth duties cut ther into the fortune.

Big Assets: Even so, sources put the net rth today at over Rs 10 crore. Officially, estate's books show a total worth of Rs crore—and the sources allege that bheshwar has played a major role in posing of Raj property at low prices and thout proper accounting, thus wilfully riving the Darbhanga heirs of their right- shares. Today, officially listed assets lude roughly Rs 55 lakh in cash, jewellery ued at Rs 10.83 lakh, shares and securities alling Rs 93.87 lakh, land and buildings rth Rs 66.64 lakh, and trusts holding ney amounting to Rs 43.71 lakh. Quite a of the palaces littering the Raj Darnga compound have been sold in order ensibly to meet tax liabilities.

The Byzantine wrangle over the Darnga wealth stems from the maharaja's l. None of Kameshwar's three wives bore n any children. According to the rules of mogeniture (where the eldest male relative nerits the estate) the principal heir ought to ve been eldest nephew Jeeveshwar. For me strange reason, however, Kameshwar youred his youngest nephew Subheshwar er the other two.

The will stipulated that the eldest marani, Rajyalakshmi, would inherit the m Bagh Palace, the largest of the lot; after r death in 1976 the palace passed on to bheshwar. Kamasundari was given the aller Nargauna Palace. Both widows (the haraja's third wife died before him) were t outright bequests of Rs 8 lakh and Rs 12 kh respectively, and two trusts of Rs 15 kh each were set up for their benefit. Each dow was supposed to receive Rs 3,000 nthly from the income of the properties. ter both maharanis died, the residual operty would be split into three parts, one ing to Subheshwar's children, the second the children of the other two nephews, and last into a trust for charitable purposes.

Trustee Changes: All the trusts were to administered by three trustees, with Lakmi Kant Jha, a cousin of the maharaja's d an ex-chief justice of the Patna High Court, serving as executor and chief trustee. Jha himself was a controversial person: apart from leap frogging straight from a lowly law practice to the advocate-generalship of Bihar, and then to the chief justiceship, just before he died in 1978, the other two trustees "resigned", and he appointed his secretary Dwarka Nath Jha and the assistant manager of the estate, Durganand Jha, to their posts. After the executor's death, the two Jhas took in a third trustee.

Today, two of the three trustees are old and almost defunct, and Subheshwar's two older brothers have been outwitted right from the beginning. Jeeveshwar, 50, the oldest, calls himself an ascetic and disclaims all interest in the estate. Yajneshwar, 38, the second brother, is ailing and half-demented. Circumstances therefore ensured that Subheshwar was the only male member of the family in a position to exploit the situation. Under his supervision, the trustees obligingly sold a string of lucrative real estate holdings.

The deals include the sale in 1968 of one palace, along with 80 acres of land, to the Posts and Telegraphs Department for Rs 22 lakh, and the sale in 1975, of 250 acres of land and two palaces to the Bihar Government for Rs 70 lakh for the L.N. Mishra Mithila University. Subheshwar now alleges that this sale was made under duress from chief minister Mishra during the Emergency. But this did not prevent the trustees from selling Nargauna Palace, which by rights belonged to Kamasundari, along with 100 acres of land to the Mithila University for Rs 31 lakh. "By mutual agreement," claims Subheshwar, "I gave the maharani 55 per cent of this money." He does not explain how he sold a palace over which he had no claim until the maharani's death.

Donations: Subheshwar has also arranged the "donation" of thousands of antiques and artefacts to a museum that he says will hopefully be taken over by the Central Government; the take-over of the Rameshwar Singh archives, which contained revenue records of the Raj Darbhanga from 1860 onwards, by the Bihar Government; and the donation of thousands of rare books, most of them in Sanskrit, to the Kameshwar Sanskrit University, which is housed in another donated palace cheek-by-jowl with the Mithila University.

WHAT lends credence to allegations that Subheshwar and the trustees have engineered huge and badly accounted for liquidations of Darbhanga assets is a report submitted by B.K. Anand and Company, chartered accountants, to Kamasundari in July 1979. INDIA TODAY obtained a copy of the voluminous report, which was filed in the Calcutta High Court after the judge permitted Kamasundari's accountants to examine the estate books.

The most controversial portion of the report relates to the disposal of a large part of the estate's jewellery. All the jewellery was kept in the Raj treasury, and every time Kamasundari accompanied the maharaja on his trips abroad, she had to requisition the pieces she needed, and they were scrupulously entered in a register. When the accounts were examined in 1979, however, Kamasundari's register, along with those of the two older maharanis, was found missing.

The largest lot of jewellery was sold in March 1967 for Rs 92 lakh to Nanubhai

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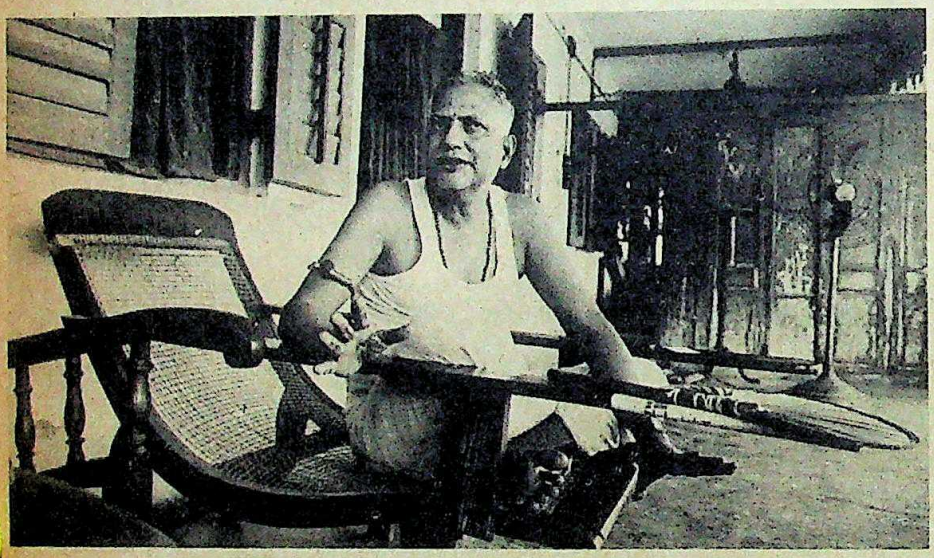
Jewellers, Bombay. The trustees had informed the tax authorities that this bid was the highest among eight offers. But the auditors found in 1979 that one crucial sheet of paper listed as many as 14 bidders—two of whom, P.N. Dass and Sons, Calcutta, and Arun and Company, Varanasi, had made bids as high as Rs 1.20 crore and Rs 1.05 crore respectively.

Letters Discovered: What amazed the auditors even more was that while examining executor's file No 49 they discovered quite a few letters written in 1966-67 to Executor Jha by a Jaipur firm, Man Radio and Electricals Private Limited, which represented Van Cleef and Arpels, the famous New York jewellers. While the Indian bidders "examined" the jewellery for two weeks, the Jaipur firm, and then Claude Arpel himself, frantically cabled and wrote to Jha begging him to sell to the New York firm, tentatively offering as much as Rs 2 crore for what Arpel called "the famous Marie Antoinette necklace, Dholpur crown, Nepal necklaces and other fine emerald and diamond pieces". Arpel knew what he was talking about: in 1954 Kameshwar had invited him to India to evaluate the Darbhanga jewels.



Trustee Dwarka Nath Jha: controversial jewellery sale

The auditors noted that Dwarka Nath Jha apparently did not forward the Arpel letters at all to the executor. "The only notings (on the letters)," says the report, "are by Shri Dwarka Nath Jha (secretary to the executor)." The last noting, on March 28, 1967, has Jha telling his accounts assistant: "Please send a wire saying that it has been sold already." The auditors have noted other lapses in jewellery transactions. They found, for example that in 1975-76 no documents had been produced to support the sale of more jewellery worth Rs 26.07 lakh.

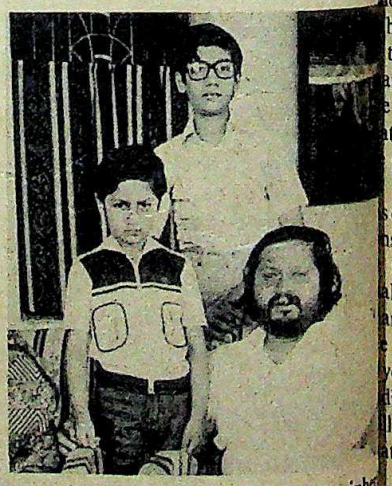
There are irregularities galore in the accounts, and they not only exhibit shoddiness in maintenance but also show that the books have not been properly audited for many years. During 1974-75, for instance, the estate sold its controlling interest in the Rameshwara Jute Mills Ltd, Muktapur, for Rs 45 lakh to Birla Brothers, Calcutta. The sale was ostensibly made because the income tax and wealth tax authorities had demanded payment of arrears of Rs 68.2 lakh, and the estate had no other means of raising the required money. But the accounts showed that the shares had fetched only Rs 37 lakh, the remaining Rs 8 lakh apparently being a 'donation' from the Birlas to the estate. More intriguingly, only Rs 28.06 lakh was paid to the tax authorities. There is no explanation as to what use the remaining money was put to.

Other deals which the accountants questioned include the sale of the Darbhanga Sugar Company to the Government for compensation of one rupee, the sale of prime land along Bombay's Peddar Road (where the income tax quarters are located now) for only Rs 9 lakh, and the sale of Walford Transport Company in Calcutta. Optimistically, the estate's accounts even show a sum of Rs 3,67,897 as 'Malikana Zardasturat' (tribute paid by tenants to the zamindari) "due since last 26 years" from Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga.

Litigation: These irregularities have led to a spate of court cases filed by Subheshwar and Kamasundari against each other. In March 1978, soon after Executor Jha died, Kamasundari applied in the Calcutta High Court asking to be appointed executrix herself and challenging the continuation of the other trustees. She contended that the executor's work ought to have been fi the assets identified, the liabilities pa and the remainder distributed, wi balance looked after by a residuary Kamasundari also pointed out that t surviving trustees were both estat ployees and could not be impartial.

Both the trustees filed a separate cation saying the executor's work wa plete, and that the estate ought to ves trust. A single-judge bench heard arg and failed to give a firm ruling; i Justice Sabyasachi Mukherjee ordere of assets to be furnished, and veste estate in the trustees. He also ga maharani's accountants permission t pendently inspect the estate's books.

Kamasundari had also been app sole trustee of the Kameshwar Re Trust and the Sitaram Trust, which ad tered the various Darbhanga temples number 108. In 1979, Subheshwar file suits against the maharani's trustees Darbhanga. In turn, she went in a against Mukherjee's ruling to a two bench of the Calcutta High Court, bu after arguments have concluded, the has yet to give its ruling. To date, there such cases pending in the Calcutta Court; Subheshwar has filed four sp leave petitions in the Supreme Court, a a court-appointed chairman of Darbhanga-owned companies and a the will's interpretation. The maharan also filed a suit in the Calcutta High for maintenance.



Subheshwar with his sons: uneasy inhe

Claims: The will's interpretati become a Gordian knot over the years L.K. Jha died, the other two truste tended that Kamasundari had no stak residuary estate. Earlier, Kamasund also argued that the monthly sum of R she was supposed to get was not from 15 lakh kept in trust, but in addition money. In 1980, a division bench

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cutta High Court held that Kamasundari entitled to one-third of the benefits of the duary estate. Subheshwar appealed this, behalf of his two minor sons, in the preme Court, and claims that he is fighting he cases only for the benefit of his sons. use 4 of the maharaja's will had stipud that Subheshwar's children could lay m to their share only if their mother was a hmin. In 1965, Subheshwar faithfully owed this instruction. "Before that," he s, "I led a very fast life. Now my only akness is drinking. Other weaknesses I left marriage."

Dwarka Nath Jha, the only functioning stee, was one of the two witnesses to the ublesome will. A cousin of the late maaja, he says the disagreements are essenly "domestic", and says everyone ought patch up. "A trustee's job in a situation this is thankless," he says. "I don't get a hing for it." But Jha refuses to discuss the troversial jewellery sale in which he fied so prominently, saying only that heshwar knows the details.

Recently, Jha and Subheshwar fell out h each other when Jha filed a complaint h the Company Law Board against the rking of Newspapers and Publications d. "My only aim," he says, "is to ensure d management and the appointment of effective board of directors." The mpany's losses have crossed Rs 10 lakh, Subheshwar says he is looking for a yer for the *Indian Nation* and *Aryavarta*.

Classic Decline: In Delhi, Kamadari's adviser Gobind Misra says that the harani is determined to fight Subheshwar the end. To the old retainers in Darnga, Subheshwar represents a destruce force, the wayward heir possessed by a th-wish driving the glory of the Raj into ground.

Subheshwar on his part insists that he committed no irregularities. "All this is a nspiracy hatched by Jagannath Mishra," says. "I will soon enter politics and llenge that Maithil on his home ground, njharpur." He plans to eventually join Communist Party of India (Marxist). yoti Basu will be the next prime minister of dia," he says with a straight face, "and I ll send both my sons to Russia or China so at they get a socialist education."

In every way, Darbhanga provides a ssic study of the decline and fall of India's dal ruling class. Dishonesty, intrigue and sipation have gnawed its grandeur to the ne, and the surviving family members now arrel rancorously over what remains. cked away in Bihar's heat and dust, amid ngo and lichi orchards, Kameshwar gh's tattered legacy has fallen prey to the discreet charms of the bourgeoisie.

—CHAITANYA KALBAG in Darbhanga

THE FAMILY

Genteel Ruins

THE DARBHANGA rulers were not really unto the manor born. The title 'Maharaja', as well as the estate's vast properties, was bestowed on Mahesh Thakur, a priest, in the late 16th Century by Mughal emperor Akbar (1556–1605) for some obscure favour. Situated 200 km north-east of Patna, not very far from the Nepal border, Darbhanga is today a dusty, crowded town that flows into another settlement, Laheriasarai. Darbhanga is a corruption of the words 'Dwar Bangla' (gateway to Bengal).

Litigation seems to run in the Darbhanga veins. Maharaja Kameshwar Singh retained a stable of solicitors —apart from 16 Rolls Royces—and fought many cases before the Privy Council in England. His uncle Lakshmishwar Singh had been the founder-president of the Bihar Landowners' Association. Kameshwar himself challenged the Zamindari Abolition Act, 1950, in the Supreme Court, and won—thus paving the way for India's First Constitutional Amendment.

A member of the Rajya Sabha during the 1950s, Kameshwar was asked by Jawaharlal Nehru to join the Congress Party. He refused—because each Congressman had to take an oath not to imbibe liquor, and the zamindar was fond of his spirits.

The same flamboyance—and recklessness—appears to have been inherited by Subheshwar. A large man, Subheshwar tends to wear florid dressing-gowns, a lot of talcum powder, and a persistent hangover. His relative youth has allowed him to outwit and outmanoeuvre his older opponents.

Reduced Life-style: His eldest brother Jeeveshwar, although an avowed *sanyasi*, married twice—the second time informally, and now lives with wife and five daughters in one of the estate's dilapidated bungalows. Yajneshwar, the second brother, lives with his wife and three sons in a seedy portion of the European Guest House. He gets only Rs 1,100 a month from the estate, and lies all day in a large room strewn dirtily with books, listening to the radio. "The rani should behave with more character," says Jeeveshwar the ascetic. "She should fight Subheshwar and take over the estate. I advised her not to sign the probate of the will."

Today, the remaining Darbhanga palaces are in a state of disrepair. The Ram Bagh Palace, once the largest among the lot, is now neglected and overrun by monkeys. Only the eldest queen's *puja* room is tended by an old priest. Subheshwar lives with his family in an outhouse, occasionally taking his 1932 Bentley—which he claims he inherited from his father—out for a spin.

Yajneshwar, the middle brother: seedy existence

Chauffeur Shivlal Shah, who once drove singer K.L. Saigal's car in Bombay, now looks after the remnants of the once-impressive Darbhanga car collection—two Rolls Royce Phantoms, worth at least Rs 30 lakh, an ancient Bentley, and a Daimler 50 horsepower saloon with a 'George V' body that Shah says will fetch at least Rs 8 lakh today.

The trustees some years back flouted court orders by selling railway tracks that once ran right into the palace compound, as well as a saloon car, for a paltry Rs 25,000—and had to apologise in court when Kamasundari objected. Kamasundari herself lives in an apartment in Delhi, rarely venturing outdoors. She is still *purdahnashin*, and does not meet any outsider.

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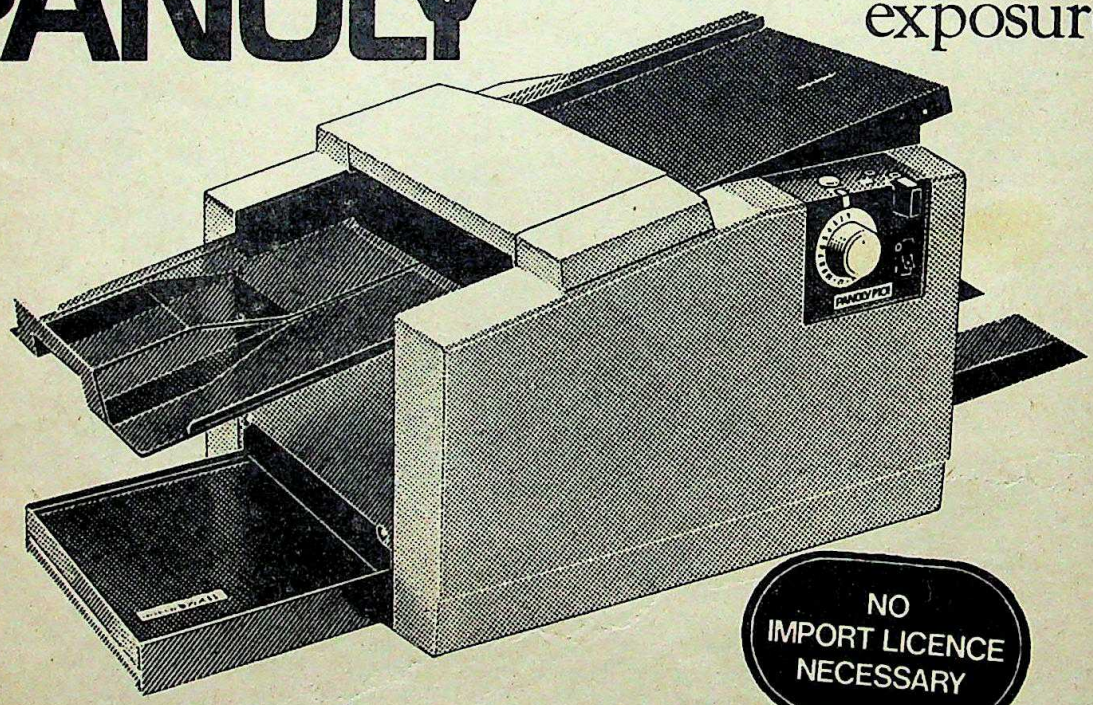

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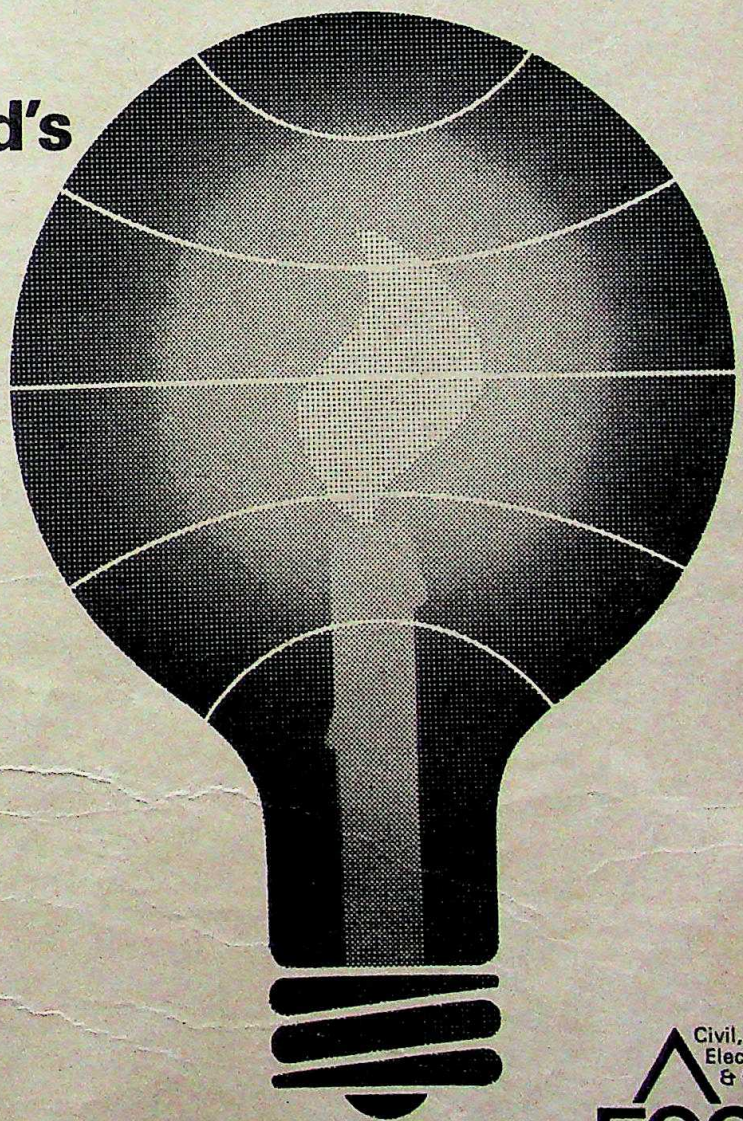

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NAFED

The Stink Of Scandal

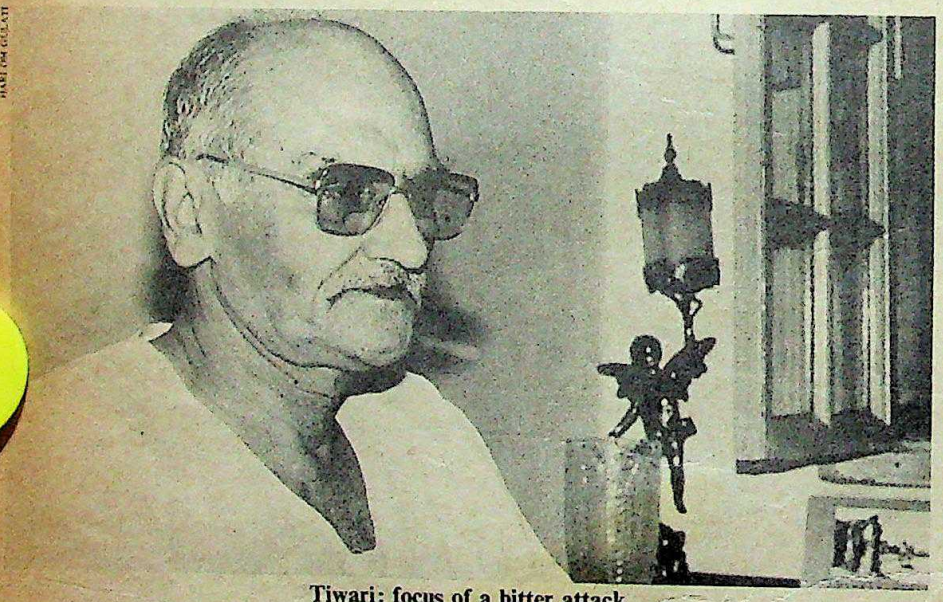
THE SPECTRE of betrayed ideals has relentlessly dogged the Indian cooperative movement. Designed to protect the farmers from exploitation and ensure remunerative prices for their produce it has repeatedly degenerated into a nexus of rampant corruption and nepotism, taking over the role of the very middlemen it was intended to eliminate. Last fortnight, the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED), a 24-year-old apex body for procuring agricultural produce like onions, rice and oilseeds, was buffeted around by MP's, cooperative movement leaders and senior government oficials for large-scale bungling in its dealings at home and abroad. And the focus of this attack was octogenarian Ram Gopal Tiwari, NAFED's chairman since 1978.

Recently over 40 MP's sent a long memorandum to the prime minister, signed by Janata MP Arvind Ganesh Kulkarni, and listing various alleged "large-scale malpractices" which have cost the NAFED over Rs 8 crore. Kulkarni's letter to the prime minister followed the opposition leaders' failure to force Agriculture Minister Rao Birendra Singh to institute an inquiry into NAFED affairs. Singh put off the Opposition saying that NAFED was an autonomous body and had set up a committee to investigate its affairs. What he omitted to add was that a committee had, indeed, been set up in May last year. But when it began to uncover culpable evidence of wrongdoing, it was disbanded and superseded by another committee. The first committee's proceedings, however, suggest across-the-board irregularities on an astonishing scale.

Onion Deal: The most serious complaint investigated by the committee relates to the export of 50,000 tonnes of onions to one importer in Malaysia, Kim Guan Choong & Company. The deal which resulted in a loss of profit and diversion of onions to a private party, was facilitated by an unexplained change in export policy which was carried out three days after the export deal was signed. Choong's representatives started negotations with NAFED, through which onion exports are channelled, and Commerce Ministry officials in early 1981. Represented in India by the Madras-based onion merchants, A.J.J. Nadar and Brothers, Choong was a regular buyer from India, buying up to 50 per cent of India's onion exports.

Tiwari says the contract was approved at a meeting at Udyog Bhavan presided over by the then commerce minister Pranab Mukherjee. Two Commerce Ministry officials were also present. NAFED sent the minutes of the meeting to the Commerce Ministry for approval, but the minutes were never returned. Nevertheless, an agreement was concluded with Choong on May 17, 1981 for the shipment of 50,000 tonnes of onions at prices varying between Rs 1,300 and Rs 4,500 a tonne depending on quality.

Before the contract, onions were ... overseas buyers without any regiona... tas. Three days after the agreeme... signed, the Commerce Ministry s... announced it had decided to allow th... of 2.25 lakh tonnes of onions only by ... with the amount for Malaysia and Sin... fixed at 50,000 tonnes. The announ... elicited 25 futile trade inquiries fro... two countries, all of which were turne... because NAFED was already commi... Choong for precisely that amou... Agriculture Ministry warned NAFED it... not sign such a large quantity to ... buyer, but the ministry was ignored. ... Kulkarni, "It can't be a coincidence t... onion quota for Malaysia and Singapo... fixed at the same quantity being ex... through Choong."



HARPREET GULATI

Tiwari: focus of a bitter attack

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Mukherjee: presiding over a deal

Adverse Effect: The Com... Ministry helped Choong gain a monop... the import of onions from India, a fact ... by the Malaysian Government. In a ... ment in the Lok Sabha last for... Commerce Minister Shiv Raj Patil ... "The Government of Malaysia ha... pressed their concern on the adverse ... on the economic livelihood of their ... tional importers of onions consequent ... NAFED entering into a long-term co... with a single buyer for onion exports. ... also revealed that onion importers fr... two countries had come to India to pl... a cancellation of the agreement. Th... legation submitted a memorandum ...

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ed that onion prices had shot up over 30 cent soon after the NAFED deal. The committee found NAFED's follow- ually curious. NAFED surrendered 65 per of the contract to Nadar because, ari told INDIA TODAY, it was not in a ion to handle a single order of such nitude. The explanation is surprising, of the country's total onion exports of lakh tonnes in 1981-1982, 70,000 tonnes handled by NAFED. Moreover, the com- ee also found that NAFED sold 10,000 es of exportable onions from its own to Nadar to export to Malaysia. Thus, cut its own profit, a staggering Rs 2.28 e, by diverting exports through Nadar, did itself out of another Rs 20 lakh by ucing handling charges to 7.5 per cent 10 per cent. As an unpleasant corollary, on prices fell by more than 40 per cent in ia, and small exporters, who were denied are of the trade, went to the Supreme rt, only to have their appeal rejected on l grounds.

N ANOTHER case NAFED suffered a massive loss through delay due to da- mage caused to a 10,000-tonne rice con- ment from Kandla Port. On January 9, , NAFED had signed an agreement for the ply of 10,000 tonnes of rice to tinental Enterprises—a Hong Kong- ed firm—through a local broker, P.L. g and Sons. NAFED made heavy rice chases for the deal but when the buyer varicated, NAFED, in violation of the ag- ment, extended the period of the contract m three months to six months. imately, when the delivery was made, ED exempted the firm from paying over 23 lakh for godown rents and interest rges.

Adding to this loss, over 4,000 tonnes of worth over Rs 1.25 crore were rejected the firm. The inquiring committee which ked into the deal, said there had been eated telexes from the Bombay branch joint manager (foreign trade) for the cellation of the contract. Despite the legal isor endorsing this opinion, and naging Director Shri Iyer urging that er buyers offering higher prices were ilable, the contract was not cancelled.

In a similar occurrence, a London- ed firm, Lewis & Peat, signed an agree- nt with NAFED in November 1980, for port of 2,500 metric tonnes of HPS groun- ut from India. With complete impunity y, however, withdrew their order at a later ge without paying the compensation ich was part of the agreement. And pite concrete legal advice, NAFED lost nsportation costs of Rs 31.02 lakh. Says wari: "There wasn't anything wrong in s decision. We can recover the money only if we lose in our transaction. Since we sold the same consignment at a higher price, the question of compensation doesn't arise."

Questionable Decision: Another major transaction on which NAFED bungled and lost over Rs 40 lakh relates to a surrender to Nadar of a 5,000-tonne onion export order which NAFED received from USSR in December 1980. Accorded for the first time with a government agency, the agreement signed entailed dispatching the consignment to Russia by May 1981. But NAFED abdi- cated, despite a requisite stock and infra- structure.A report dated June 12, 1981 re- ceived by the Agriculture Ministry states that: "There is no reference in the file as to how A.J.J. Nadar was contacted and who contacted him and how these terms were arrived at."

NAFED was to have gained about Rs 800 per tonne in this bargain. Earlier, a senior official in the Agriculture Ministry had, in a letter dated May 8, 1981, questioned NAFED's decision. Tiwari, however, justified it by saying that: "Russians were delaying the opening of letter of credit and were insisting on stiff conditions which we thought would be difficult for us to fulfil." NAFED, however, decided to recover 10 per cent charges. Even these it later reduced to 7.5 per cent.

NAFED cut its own profit, a staggering Rs 2.28 crore, by diverting exports through an agent and did itself out of another Rs 20 lakh by reducing handling charges to 7.5 per cent from 10 per cent.

In addition, NAFED has also been char- ged with losing money by engaging people with questionable background as brokers, who buy on its behalf. For example, NAFED appointed Jagdish Prashad & Company as guarantee broker at Calcutta against the advice of regional manager, Calcutta, and other senior officials based there. According to a letter dated April 18, 1981, despite repeated requests this firm has not accounted for 51 wagons of onions allotted to it. In a similar case, Subhash Traders, a firm based in Bilaspur, Tiwari's home town, did not submit the accounts for over eight months. It was appointed broker for Nagpur by NAFED after ignoring the claims of Vidarbha Co- operative Marketing Society which happens to be a founder member of NAFED.

Disillusioned Staff: These details about NAFED would not have seen the light of day if its employees had not leaked them out after they failed to force the authorities to accept their demands for pay rise and regularised promotions and appointments. NAFED has been in turmoil ever since Tiwari's rein- duction as its chairman in June 1979 for a three-year term, and frustrated employees began their tirade against him.

On May 23 last year the board of directors set up an inquiry committee headed by Nahar Singh, its senior vice-chairman and V.B.L. Mathur, IAS, and managing director, National Cooperative Development Corpo- ration, S.B. Patel, and Nathu Singh, both NAFED directors to "inquire into the grie- vances of the staff leading to incidents from May 11 to 13, 1981 and thereafter". On June 22, 1918, a joint memorandum signed by NAFED Employees' Union and NAFED Officers' Association, requested the com- mittee to also look into chairman's role in four export transactions.

As the inquiring committee began its proceedings and tumbled on to impec- cable evidence against some deals, the NAFED's board decided to disband the com- mittee. In its meeting held on August 27, 1981, the board resolved: "As employees have informed the committee that they have no other outstanding grievance except agai- nst the chairman and further the agitation of staff having been suspended, there seems to be no propriety to continue the functioning of the committee..."

Group Rivalries: The board, however, appointed a new eight-member panel headed by V.P. Patel, a former BJP MLA from Gujarat to look into the allegations against Tiwari. The committee took over 10 months to deliver its judgement which failed to absolve the chairman of all the lapses. Interestingly, the panel reflected the group rivalries in NAFED. All other members but Mathur of the earlier committee had been dropped. While Mathur declined to serve on the committee, majority of the former members were facing graft charges. For example, opposition lea- ders have made serious allegations against Tapeshwar Singh, director in NAFED and chairman of National Consumers' Co- operative Federation, since NAFED has placed orders with some firms allegedly owned by Singh's relations.

Nevertheless, the Government decided to protect Tiwari, who is also president, Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee(I), because of the political implications of the entire episode. Even the prime minister, who is prompt in referring such charges to the CBI for investigation did not care to reply to the various letters sent to her either by the employees or the opposition leaders. Although bought by the taxpayers' money, dirty linen is apparently not to be washed in public.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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SEX DETERMINATION

A Needling Controversy

Plan Your Family. Get Over Financial Worries. Know The Sex Of The Child Before It Is Born, At A Nominal Cost.

THIS cryptic message appeared two months back in the holy city of Amritsar on bills stuck to walls, in leaflets and painted on the sides of buses. By then New Bhandari Hospital, and the rather unusual service it rendered to the community, had already gained a wide, if not dubious, reputation. Located in the heart of the old city, the private clinic, set up in March last year by a husband-and-wife team of doctors, was already 'treating' 30 would-be mothers every month. By using a syringe to tap samples of the amniotic fluid, or the liquid environment in which the foetus swims and which it drinks and urinates, the clinic was analysing the unborn baby's chromosome pattern to prophesy if it was a boy or a girl. This knowledge, bought for an amount of Rs 500, on occasions prompted the parents of a coming female child to walk into the nearest abortion clinic. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act has no provision against selective killing of female foetuses.

Last month, reports of what was going on at New Bhandari Hospital came under public gaze through newspapers. More than just pricking the foetal sac with a needle, it caused an eruption of seething anger. Amniocentesis, or the technique of predicting the sex and congenital defects of a foetus by needle-tapping the sac, became the focal point of a feminist revolt last fortnight and was snowballing into a nation-wide movement to put a ban on the tests. To stoke the fire, reports began pouring in from various parts of the country that the tests were being used even in government-aided hospitals.

Six women's organisations, led by Vimala Ranadive, wife of the Marxist politburo member B.T. Ranadive and secretary of the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women, and Sushila Gopalan, MP, held a seminar in the capital demanding a ban on the sex determination test. Later on they gave a memorandum to the prime minister, and their members fanned out to states to mobilise public opinion against 'female foeticide'.

Fierce Outcry: If the outcry was fierce, it was hardly surprising. Though infanticide is a culpable offence, and the desertion of female babies a common enough phenomenon, the selective abortion of female foetuses is in the law covered by no stricter provisions than those governing abortion in general. Ranadive argued that female infanticide is one reason for the sharp decline in India's sex ratio; from 972 female births for every 1,000 male births in 1901 to 930 in 1971 before rising slightly to 935 in the 1981 census. Says Ranadive: "It is like the Nazi 'final solution' of exterminating the Jews and it only adds a touch of sophistication to the brutal practice."

Writes Anjali Deshpande, "In the good old days women were tied hand and foot and thrown on to the funeral pyres of their husbands. Nowadays people seem to be in more of a hurry to burn them—they are killed or driven to suicide while their husbands are still alive. Now comes a quicker and less cumbersome method of getting rid of a female child, by a modern technique known as amniocentesis."

Amniocentesis in India began eight years ago at the miniscule Human Cytogenetics Unit of New Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). But droves of expectant mothers began using this facility to abort the birth of daughters. Disturbed by such reports, the powerful Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) requested the AIIMS in 1975 to discontinue *per se* the tests for sex determination. The request was honoured and since then the technique was used only to check out if the baby suffered from genetic defects.

But the technique sprouted in various private clinics, as well as some public hospitals of the country, resulting in an estimated 500 instances of female foeticide.

IS IT A BOY OR GIRL?

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It is now possible to find the sex of your child in early pregnancy before it is born with the aid of latest sophisticated imported electronic equipments and established scientific techniques. For details contact or write :

ANTE-NATAL SEX DETERMINATION CLINIC

M/s. NEW BHANDARI HOSPITAL (REGD.)

2638 Chowk Moni (1/S Chatiwind Gate) Amritsar. Phone 32500.

The New Bhandari Hospital advertisement: blatant invitation

Apart from Amritsar, the tests were done at Lucknow's prestigious King George's Medical College and Hospital as well as the government-aided Sir Hurkisondas Nurrotamdas Hospital. The utility of tests to determine genetic defects (as gradually became secondary to their popular attraction as sex determinative. Said Ranadive: "Nine out of 10 parents for amniocentesis only to know the sex of the baby. And all the nine parents amniocentesis driven by the only motive killing the foetus if it is found to be a girl. Unless they are determined to abort a female foetus why should they like [illegible] an amniocentesis test in the first place."

NEW BHANDARI Hospital is run by Prithipal Singh Bhandari, the proprietor, and Kanan Bhandari, his wife and a gynaecologist. Most of their clients are referred to them by private doctors and other clinics who charge Rs [illegible] commission. The Bhandaris have been somewhat cagey following the furore.

Kanan Bhandari, when asked about the ethics involved in her activity, cited a legalistic escape route, arguing that New Bhandari Hospital which the doctors did was "amniocentesis and not medical termination of pregnancy of foetuses more than 20 weeks."

However, the letters which have recently addressed to the doctors as a part of the campaigning campaign are brazenly clear. One of them reads: "Most prospective clients in quest of a male child, as the social set-up in India demands, keep on giving birth to a number of female children, which in a way not only enhances the increasing population (sic) but leads to a chain reaction of many economic and mental stresses on the families ... antenatal sex determination can come to our rescue and can help in exercising some check over the population as well as give relief to the couples requiring male children."

The Punjab Government, however, was not amused by this argument. In an unprecedented move last fortnight, it directed the district medical officer to initiate action against the doctor couple. The state government also ordered the tests to be banned at the clinic and decreed that it could not even carry out any MTP as well. The Government might have felt morally justified, but women activists in the state thought it was a sop that would not stand legal scrutiny. Said Ranadive: "What we want is proper legislation to stop the use of

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sis in sex determination, this order will
y be struck down by court."
Replying to a calling attention motion
e subject by irate members, B. Shankara-
the Union health minister, said in the
Sabha that only some "private doctors"
encouraging pregnant women to take
tests for female foeticide. He called it
hical, but made no mention of any
lation to stop the tests.
So far, the needle-tappers have not
n in. They have maintained that in many
the enquiring parents did not go in for
bortion after the detection of a female
. They assert that their responsibility
with the correct prediction, and if the
nts go to an abortion clinic after that, "it
eir affair". Only K.K. Loomba, the
ologist at New Bhandari Hospital has,
recent interview, sought to justify the
equent abortion with the specious argu-
t that a couple having a daughter have a
to opt for a son.
However, human geneticists at various
itals of the country, betray at the most
mbivalent attitude towards the current
roversy. A Delhi geneticist, who had
ked with Hargovind Khorana, the doyen
enetic research in the United States, till
year, remarked: "Sex determination is
tricably linked with detection of certain
editary defects, such as haemophilia.
men are carriers of the dreadful disease,
e men are the sufferers. In such event, the
nts would like the male foetus to be
royed, though that may be sex discrimi-
on in reverse gear."
Will a blanket ban on amniocentesis
? K. Kucheria of the Human Cytogene-
Unit at AIIMS thinks it might be difficult
nforce as "a gynaecologist can learn the
nique in just two months whereas setting
laboratory may cost a couple of lakhs of
ees at the most and the service of a human
eticist." She poses the question: "How
you police a backyard laboratory?"
In fact, Indian doctors have introduced
o-frills cut-rate variant of amniocentesis
ch makes the technique even more chea-
available to doctors than their Western
nterparts, though it makes the exercise
bly hazardous. No clinic in India, for
ance, uses ultrasound devices to locate
exact position of the foetal head before
cing the yolk sac.
However, unless public opinion forces a
nge in social attitudes many parents will
the dangers of that in the male-
minated Indian society to be forewarned
nst the coming of a female baby, and
h the hazards, and the price of law-
king, against the future cost of dowry,
then the premium will keep on rising on
simple yet sinister question: boy or girl?

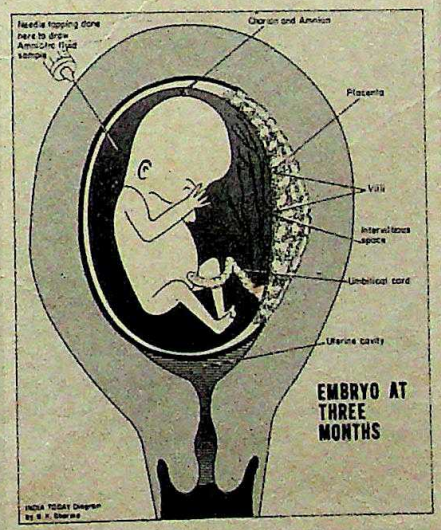
—SUMIT MITRA

AMNIOCENTESIS

Womb Tapping

THE TEST is fairly recent and the technique was mastered in the West only in the mid-'60s. It involves 'tapping' the amniotic fluid, or the watery cushion in which the foetus is enclosed, with a precision needle that has to be inserted without damaging either the foetus or the nutrients-carrying placenta. The amniotic fluid is mainly made up of foetal urine and, from the 14th week onwards, it carries cells that have loosened out of the skin and the gastro-intestinal tract of the foetus. These cells carry vital clues to the number, nature and arrangement of chromosomes, or rod-shaped structures at the nucleus of the foetus' body cells. Depending on the pattern of chromosomes, both the sex of the infant and incurable genetic defeats, if any, can be predicted.

Human chromosomes are 46 in number, but the last two determine sex; they are similar, or XX, for the female and dissimilar or XY, for the male. The



amniotic fluid sample, after being tapped (known as amniocentesis), is centrifuged; then the cell sediments are fixed in a mixture of acetic acid and methanol, smeared on a slide and subjected to the 'Barr body test', or a test to ascertain if the last chromosome is an X-chromosome. A positive Barr body finding establishes the foetus to be female.

There is a double-checking facility available by which the smear is again examined under a fluorescent microscope (using ultra-violet light through an exciter filter) to find if a Y-chromosome is at all present in the cell. A negative Barr body test, coupled with a positive Y-chromosome test, spells a male child.

New Vista: However, the current debate on the ethics involved in the tests concerns only the universally denounced sex determination part of the exercise. On the other hand, amniocentesis as a technique has opened a new vista for cytogenetic prediction, and Catch-22 strikes there. By needle-tapping the mother, it is now possible to prophesy if the baby has juvenile jaundice, if it is a mongoloid baby, if it is suffering from the female Turner's syndrome or the male Kleinefelter syndrome, or if there are gross genetic defects.

Says K. Kucheria, who pioneered the Human Cytogenetic Unit at the Institute and still runs it: "Amniocentesis as a method for predicting hereditary defects is an invaluable aid for legally pre-empting the tragic birth of a deformed child. As a scientist I have no quarrel with it. My only objection is against using the technique purely for sex determination." Kucheria learnt amniocentesis in the United Kingdom and adapted it so well to Indian conditions that she did not need ultra-sound devices as utilised in the West to draw the amniotic fluid samples without "bloody-tapping", the medical slang for causing accidental injury to the foetus. She still does over 200 amniocentesis tests a year to determine congenital defects, through sex determination is completely banned in her unit.

Test Reports: Apart from New Bhandari Hospital at Amritsar, claimed Kucheria, sex determination tests were being carried out at Sir Hurkisondas Nurrotamdas Hospital in Bombay, a government-aided hospital. There were also reports that the tests have been conducted in hospitals in Lucknow. Said Dr Avinash Chandra Das, the head of the anatomy department of the well-known King George's Medical College: "Even though we take precautions on this count, we have as many as 25 cases referred to us per month, which we pass on to the Queen Mary's Hospital, for amniotic fluid testing. We would not mind if we can bring about some legislation against the misuse of these tests."

However, Dr Chandravati of the Queen Mary's Hospital, although veering off from admitting that they entertain such cases, added: "I am not very convinced myself about the advisability and ethical rationale of these tests, in spite of the tests being useful where detection of female sex-linked diseases are concerned. In any case the genetic code can be kept confidential after the tests are taken to prevent any misuse."

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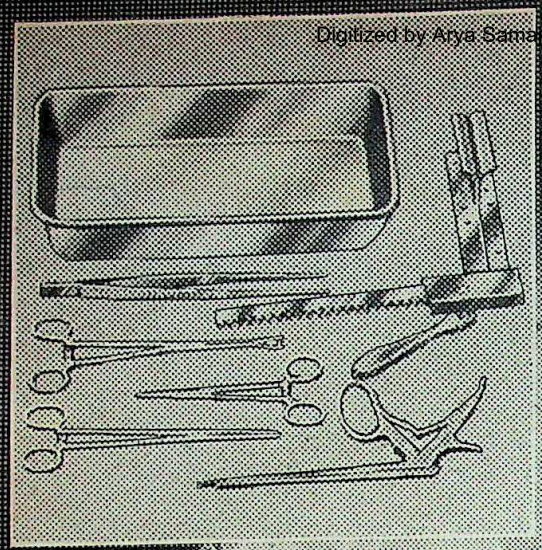

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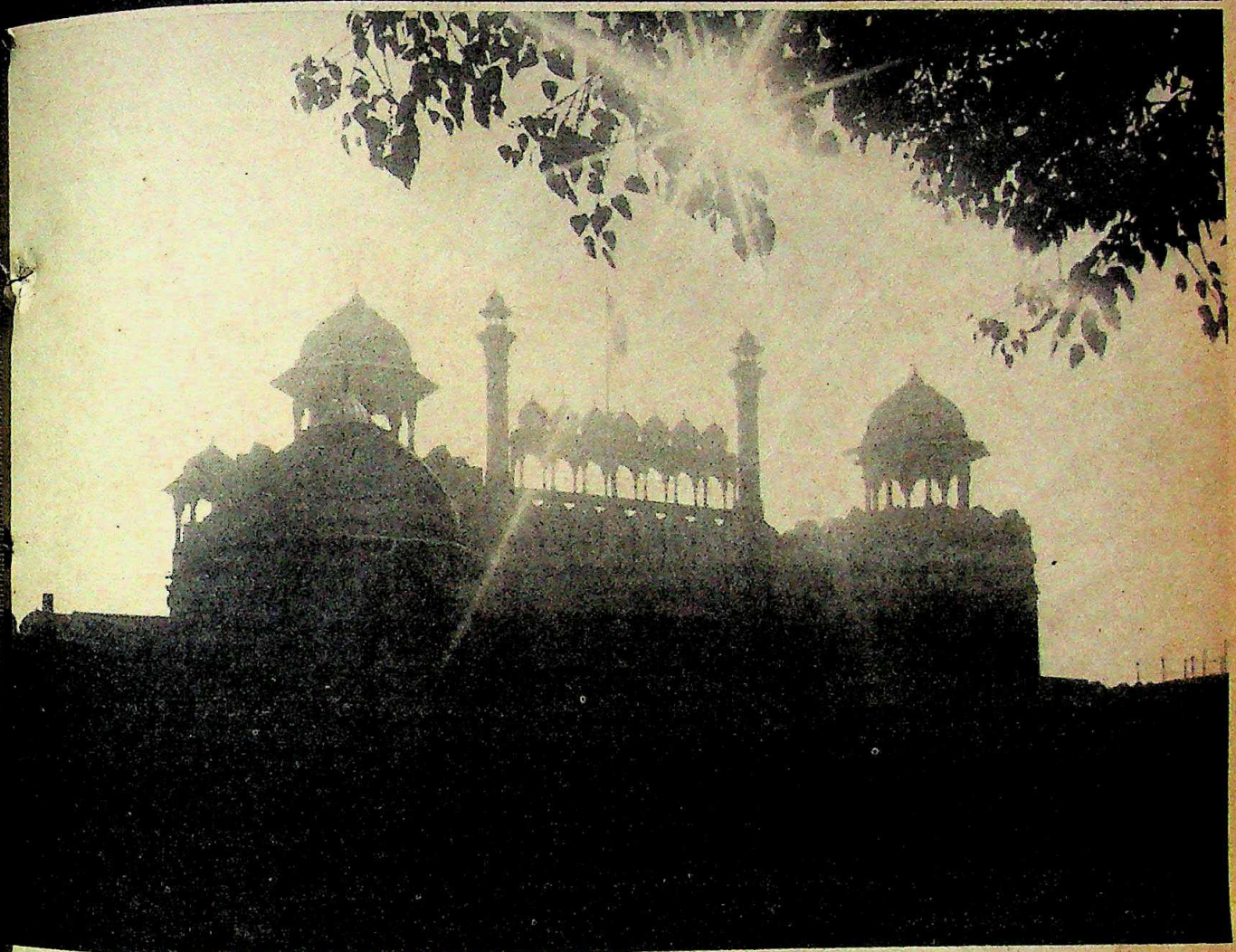
Jawaharlal Nehru



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75 TATA STEEL

1907-1982

TATA STEEL

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What benefits the people, benefits the nation.

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The View From Moscow

THE LAST few months have witnessed a dangerous eruption of armed conflicts across the globe; Britain and Argentina in the South Atlantic, Iran and Iraq in the Persian Gulf and Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in Lebanon. Throughout all this, the Soviet Union has maintained an unusually subdued silence. What are the current compulsions that guide the ageing policy makers in the Kremlin? What are the Soviet Union's priorities in its foreign policy?

Last fortnight, INDIA TODAY *columnist* BHABANI SEN GUPTA *returned from a 12-day visit to the Soviet Union. He participated in an international conference on "Current Problems of Contemporary Asia" in Moscow before travelling to two Asian republics—Ajerbaijan and Armenia. While in Moscow, he had wide-ranging discussions with leading Soviet scholars on international political issues and problems, met top-ranking media men as well as Soviet Foreign Ministry officials. In this, the first of a two-part report, he sums up current Soviet foreign policy priorities and stances:*

"EAST is East and West is West, and Moscow's where they meet." This tourist guidebook adage comes alive to all perceptive visitors to the capital of the Soviet Union, the world's largest country, the second greatest in terms of gross national product, the first or the second in military power or one of the two equals on the planet. Atop the Kremlin's highest towers, five immense rotating red stars glowing bright ruby red proudly proclaim every night the Soviet Union's grand ascent to the pinnacle of power within a short historical haul of six decades. Inside the Kremlin, a group of elderly men who have made it to the politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and their aides keep track of the ways the world keeps going. For a decade in the '70s, these men came to the heady conclusion that the world correlation of forces had turned decisively in favour of socialism and the national liberation movement. It was their Marxist-Leninist way of saying that the USSR and its allies and friends in the socialist countries and the Third World had become intrinsically stronger than the forces of world capitalism and imperialism headed by the United States of America.

That hope-beaming premise still holds in all current Soviet writings and oral statements on world affairs. However, in private discussions, the Soviets recognise that with the turn of the '80s, the world situation has become "complicated", and that both socialism and national liberation face "difficult problems". They even go further and concede that the "militarist offensive" of the Reagan Administration on a global scale to contain the Soviet Union, together with the Polish crisis in the socialist bloc and the grim setback suffered by the national liberation movement—more precisely by the PLO and the "steadfast" group of Arab states—in the Middle East has created a dangerous world environment greatly enhancing the risks of nuclear war.

Temporary Setbacks: "A combination of events has created temporary difficulties for socialism and the national liberation movement," conceded a ranking Soviet world affairs analyst. "However, we need not be pessimistic. Imperialism still has a lot of reserve power, but it is not half as strong as it sometimes looks. Contradictions within the largest imperialist power, the USA, are increasing, and contradictions between the USA and its capitalist allies are sharpening fast. The national liberation movement has undoubtedly suffered a severe setback in Lebanon. Israel and its patron, the USA, have taken full advantage of the divisions among the Arab states. The situation in the Middle East is further complicated by the war between Iran and Iraq. However, the tide will turn before long, and the national liberation movement will reassert its strength and vitality."

Optimism is the constitutional obligation of all communists as much as the pursuit of happiness is that of all Americans. The Marxist-Leninist conviction that the universe's natural law of change is from imperialism-capitalism to socialism and national liberation constantly feeds communist optimism, and helps communists [illegible] with, and try to get over, setbacks, defeats and losses. Advance retreat are equally essential parts of the struggle against capitalism imperialism which still commands the bulk of the earth's resources

As far as the Soviet Union and its socialist allies are concerned Moscow's leaders rule out retreat. "The first priority in our foreign policy is consolidation and increment of the strength of the socialist system," affirmed a Soviet scholar whose special field is China. Other Soviet analysts stressed that the USSR would not let strategic parity between Moscow and Washington be disturbed. That this is a key objective of the Soviet leadership became clear in an article written for *Pravda* by Defence Minister Ustinov in the first week of July. Whatever strategic doctrine the US might adopt and whichever new weapon systems it might add to its over-over-kill nuclear arsenal, it would be adequately matched by Moscow, Ustinov asserted. The Soviets would not surrender any socialist real estate to the "enemies of socialism", be it Poland, Indochina or Afghanistan.

Consolidating Gains: "This is a time for caution," Soviet international experts say in one voice, indicating that the Soviet Union will hold and consolidate the gains of the '70s rather than try to expand further the frontiers of its influence. In that sense, Soviet foreign policy is not "expansionist" beyond Afghanistan in which country Soviet troops will stay on as long as their presence is considered necessary in the interests of Afghanistan as well as the USSR. Moscow is in no mood to provoke Reagan's America.

Indeed, the Kremlin is bracing itself to live with a second Reagan term in the White House, at any rate with another Republican president of the Reagan political hue. "We are prepared for the worst," said a ranking Soviet expert on US affairs. "As we watch the American scene, we are encouraged by positive developments like the movement against nuclear war and the growing opposition to so-called Reaganomics. But at this point we are not certain that American liberalism will be able to capture the White House in 1984."

Reaganism with or without Reagan in the White House, Soviet foreign policy decision makers conscious of the huge gap between the global sweep of Soviet influence and the resources the Soviets' command to back a truly globalist foreign policy. The USSR is a global power in a very selective style. The socialist community, including countries with a "socialist orientation", now extends to four continents, but five of the latter are in Asia, two in south Africa and only one in Latin America. These eight countries plus Poland impose on the Soviet Union an annual financial burden of $20 billion. The socialist international division of labour operates this time strongly in favour of the fledgling Marxist-ruled states. The scenario will change towards the end of the decade when Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea in South-east Asia, Afghanistan and South Yemen in South and West Asia and Cuba in Latin America will have resolved most of their economic problems. Poland will probably continue to be a drain on Soviet resources for two more

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he Soviet Union itself is in need of vast amounts of imported ologies and capital to break out of the present stalemate in its mic expansion, which is created by mixed features of develop- nd underdevelopment. What the USSR has achieved by way ustrialisation and modernization, indeed in overall develop- f its multinational population of 26 crore, is tremendous and ut parallel in history. But a colossal amount of more work to be done before the USSR can harness its resources for pment.

These resources lie mostly in the eastern regions of the USSR the infrastructure is weak and the cost of building a n infrastructure is awesomely high. In the last 15 years, the s have completely indus- d agriculture, and intro- imported high-quality ology to 4,000 industries. ulture still remains a prob- f great magnitude, espe- the production of fodder in highly adverse weather tions, while some 4,000 industrial units need new ologies that can be impor- ore quickly and cheaply produced at home. "An- two decades of peaceful ruction, and the USSR is orld's number one econo- power," mused a Soviet t.

Soviet scholars have concluded that India has arrived "step by step" at the capitalist road to development. But India is an "independent capitalist country" not a backyard of the world capitalist system. As long as India maintains its present economic, political and foreign policy postures, the Soviets do not mind if New Delhi seeks to normalise its relations with this or that power, or diversifies sources of military procurement

Desperate Bids: "America ot stop the growth and opment of the Soviet eco- ," observed this expert. "But America can delay it, and this at the Reagan Administration is determined to do." Hence ington's "sanctions" against the USSR, the ban on the export hnologies, the desperate bid to pressure the West Europeans apan not to participate in Soviet development. The Soviets crafted a three-point foreign policy strategy to blunt the lethal ts of the Reagan Administration's "blind anti-Sovietism". The plank of this strategy is the "peace offensive", which is the um opus of Soviet foreign policy today and will remain so for l more years.

The second plank is cooperation with the states of Western pe. "Next to consolidating and increasing the strength of the ist system, our priority region is Europe," said several foreign s specialists. The third plank is aimed at rebuilding the bridges were built between the USSR and the US, which the Reagan inistration has been "destroying one by one".

IN THE Third World, Moscow's current anxieties are focussed on he Middle East. Here, Soviet experts note that the ruling elites in everal Arab states are engaged in different levels of boration with the United States in their anxiety to defend their e regimes. High officials of five Arab states visited Moscow in irst week of July and discussed the Lebanese situation with gn Minister Gromyko and others. The Soviets reassured them other Arab leaders of their readiness to extend "all possible to enable the Arabs to resist Israeli aggression.

Promises: "But the Arabs must do their own work first, and n help them only if they help themselves," observed a Soviet gn Ministry official. The Soviets have promised to replace the ons the PLO will be losing in Lebanon, when the partisans have uped in another location. The Soviets have also agreed to fer more sophisticated arms and weapons to Syria. Moscow seems to have made it clear to the US and Israel that should Israel invade Syria and the Syrian Government ask for military help, the Kremlin would be treaty-bound to render "all the help necessary to defend Syria".

In the Persian Gulf, the Soviets take a highly positive view of the Islamic revolution in Iran, and focus on its anti-American content. Moscow seems to be willing to live with Teheran's slogan "Neither East Nor West", and build cooperative economic relations based on it. The Soviets are disturbed by the continuing Iran-Iraq war. They lack clout in either country to bring the war to an end. In the current context of Persian Gulf and Middle Eastern policy, the Soviets would rather see Teheran win the war than lose it to Baghdad, though they would prefer the two neighbours to call off the war and address themselves to the menacing Israeli aggression in Lebanon.

In South Asia, Soviet friendship for India remains a lynchpin of Moscow's foreign policy. The Indian image remains high in Moscow, the image of Indira Gandhi higher. Indeed the Soviet attitude towards India is one of great trust and confidence in Indo-Soviet friendship and profound admiration for India's role in world affairs and India's efforts to resolve its "difficult and complex socio-economic and political problems".

Misgivings: Soviet scholars have concluded that India has arrived "step by step" at the capitalist road to development. But India is an "independent capitalist country", not a backyard of the world capitalist system. As long as India maintains its present economic, political and foreign policy postures, the Soviets do not mind if New Delhi seeks to normalise its relations with this or that power, or diversifies external sources of military procurement. However, Soviet scholars wonder with unconcealed misgiving what may be the political fall out of India's present openings to multinationals and western monopoly houses. The Soviets do not expect India to seek for it a place in the American framework of international relations. But they do watch for changes in America's attitude to and policy for India.

The current Soviet stance on Pakistan is more complex than the negative statements that emanate from the mass media. The Soviets recognise the existence of "positive elements" in Pakistan and would welcome the conclusion of a no-war pact between Pakistan and India if—and it's a stern if—this compact would not expand American influence in South Asia. More specifically, they would welcome this kind of a pact if it prevents Pakistan from placing bases at the disposal of the US in the event of a crisis in the Persian Gulf and thus strengthen Pakistan's non-alignment. That, in Soviet thinking, would improve the regional climate in South Asia and facilitate the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

No one in the Soviet Union expects a major breakthrough in Sino-Soviet relations in the immediate future. "Sino-Soviet relations are improving slowly. This process will remain for several years. One day the Soviet Union and China will come together again. But it's a day that is still quite far off," observed a ranking Soviet expert on China. And he added, "China is not on our high priority list. First, the socialist system. Then, Western Europe. Third, the United States. Fourth, the national liberation movement. Finally, China."

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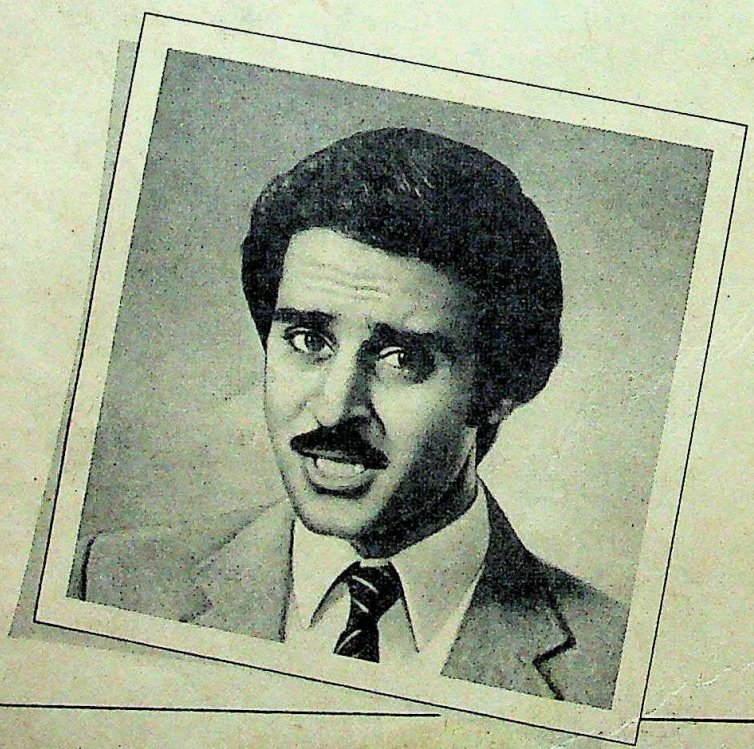
Nor even the number of credit cards in a wallet.
I believe in an appearance that's personal.
A look that says it all without having to say a word...



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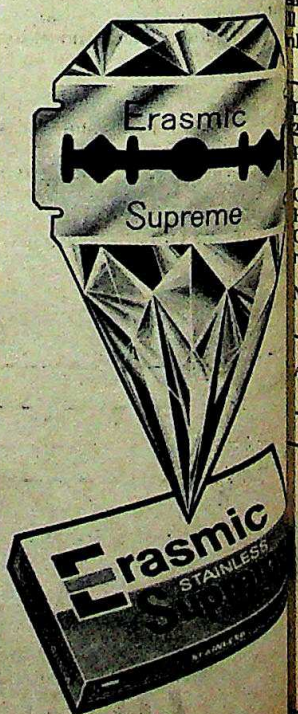

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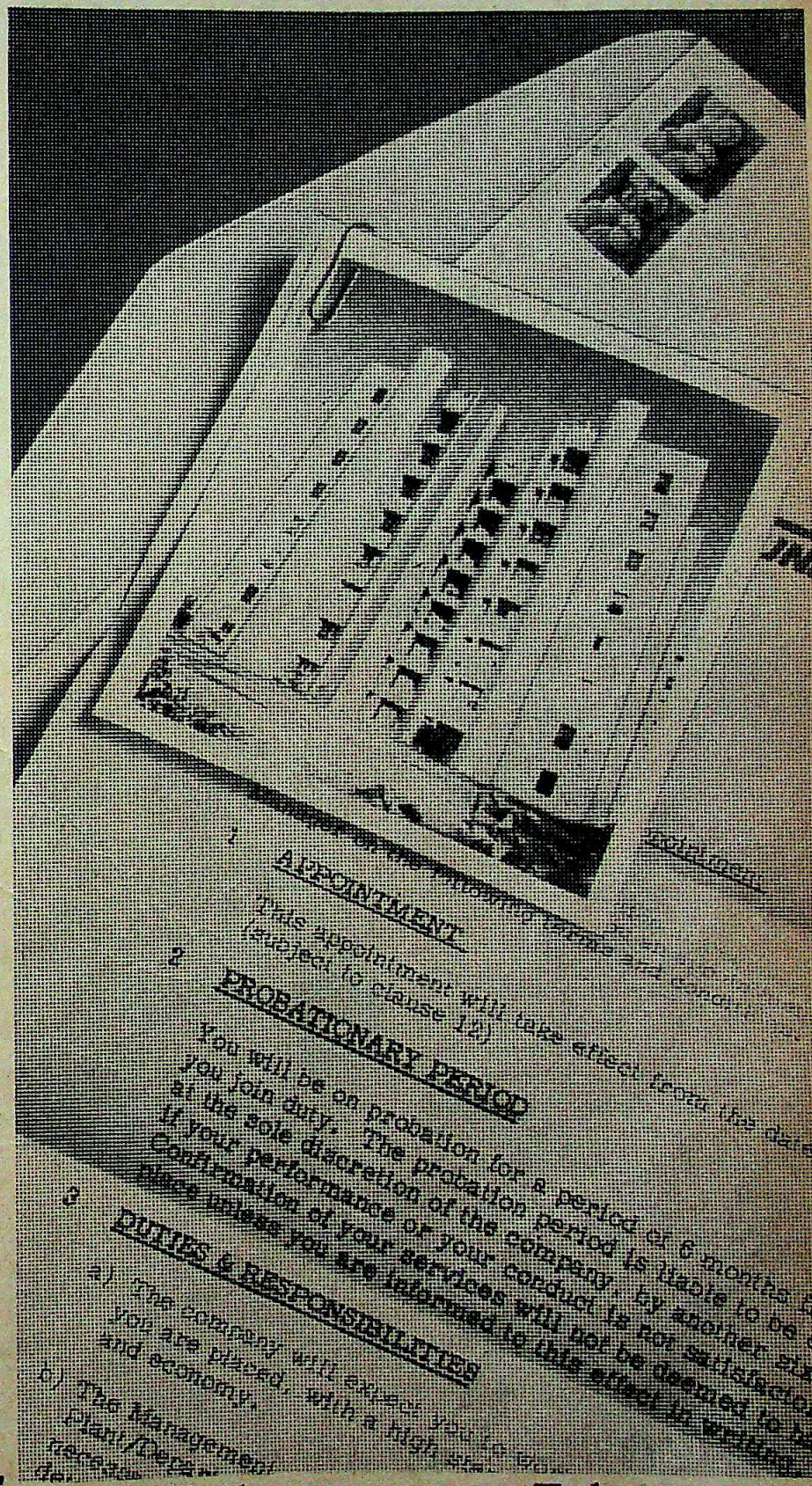

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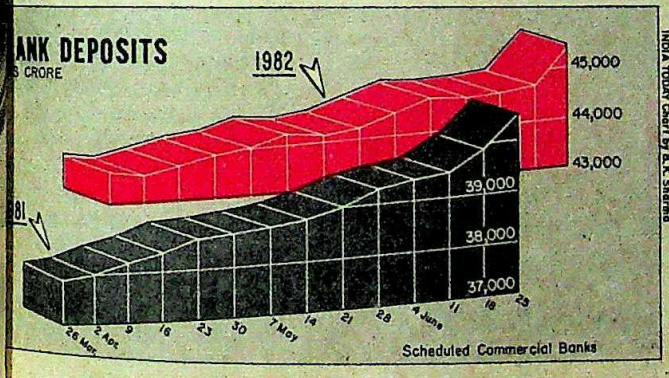
BRAIN TRAIN

THE GOVERNMENT is thinking of setting up a no profit-no loss corporation abroad to channel non-resident investment into the country. The corporation will also involve non-resident Indians in the task of identifying the best suited technologies for new products and processes, the assumption being that Indian scientists and technologists abroad are in a position to pinpoint the laboratories where work is going on in the priority areas. One benefit expected to accrue from this is that the country need not always go to multinational corporations for the required technologies and processes. A third task that the proposed corporation is expected to take up is the facilitation of short visits back to India by non-resident Indian experts, either on lecture tours or on brief assignments if the occasion arises. The proposal is still being subjected to preliminary processing, but the Prime Minister, Mrs Gandhi, is expected to discuss the possibility and potential of such a corporation during her current visit to the United States. Meanwhile, no decision has been taken on a parallel proposal to set up manufacturing facilities abroad in key high-technology areas, using the services of Indians abroad. Some other developing countries have already started moving in this direction.

OP IN DEPOSITS

HOUGH a credit-hungry industry continues to complain about insufficient lending by the banks, the reason lies not so much with the Reserve Bank's restrictions as with the slower wth of bank deposits, leaving the banks with little money to lend. posits in the first quarter of 1982 grew by a miniscule 0.73 per cent haps the slowest in over a decade), while in the second quarter are up by barely 3.82 per cent (against 6.74 per cent in the esponding quarter of 1981). In the six months taken together, wth has been a poor 4.59 per cent. This signals a continuation of long-term trend towards slower deposit growth—the rate of



rease dropping steadily from 26.4 per cent in 1977–78 to 15.2 per t in 1981–82. In recent months, deposits in savings and current ounts particularly have shown virtually no increase, indicating a ersion of temporarily surplus cash into non-bank channels. vitably, bank loans during the three months till June-end have shown virtually no increase. Perhaps the one ray of hope in this k scenario is the sharp spurt in deposits in the final week of June. this a flash in the pan or a signal of better times ahead?

TERING FOR MORE

HOUGH a major share of its profits still continues to be its country-wide cigarette sales, ITC's top brass obviously sees large rupee signs in its future as far as its rapidly expanding el chain, the Welcomgroup, is concerned. In what is still a closely-rded secret, the company is now planning to launch a chain of taurants in all the major cities under the Welcomgroup banner. company will use the services of the chefs currently employed in r five-star hotels to launch the restaurants, and the first of the in will open in Bangalore early next year, to be followed by mbay, Delhi and Madras.

KANDLA COMES OF AGE

THE FLOUNDERING free trade zone at Kandla in Gujarat seems set for a take-off—at long last. Exports from Kandla almost trebled last year to Rs 70 crore, from Rs 25.5 crore in 1980–81 and Rs 9.4 crore in 1979–80. A further 50 per cent increase, to well over Rs 100 crore, is expected this year, making for a tenfold multiplication in three years. During the first quarter (April–June) alone, exports totalled Rs 27.4 crore, up sharply from Rs 10.8 crore in the corresponding quarter of last year. Nine new units have already gone into production this year, raising the total units in operation to 75. A further 20 units are expected to be commissioned before the year is out.

RELYING ON RELIANCE

DHIRUBHAI Ambani's success with Reliance Textile Industries Ltd has now set other textile magnates thinking. A southern textile mill has commissioned a leading consultancy firm to analyse the reasons for Ambani's success in the cloth market. The underlying logic is that none of Ambani's other shenanigans would have been of much use for Reliance if his cloth had not proved a runaway success with both the trade and the consumer. The consultancy firm is now getting ready to study Reliance's marketing strategy in 60 cities and towns all over the country.

CUSTOMARY CRUNCH

THE PUBLIC investment board may have cleared Maruti Udyog's proposal to manufacture cars and light commercial vehicles in collaboration with Suzuki Motor Company of Japan, but the viability of the project rests on a yet to be taken decision on the customs duty to be charged on imported components. Maruti's project proposal mentions a price of Rs 40,000 on the assumption that duty will be reduced to 15 per cent from 140 per cent, but key officials in the Government are reported to be unwilling to allow this. If the customs duty is not reduced, the estimate is that Maruti will not be able to offer a car for less than Rs 65,000. Another issue to be decided is whether the car producing company should be Maruti Udyog itself or a subsidiary to be created for the purpose. If it is to be the latter, how much of the total equity capital should the parent company hold? The company has proposed that it should hold less than 50 per cent of the shares, with the balance being held by Suzuki and the financial institutions. But the Government is opposed to the idea, and wants the parent company to keep more than 50 per cent, so that the Government in effect has total control.

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FERA

The End Of An Era

FERA—that four-letter acronym for the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act—has for close to a decade signified the Government's determination to bring foreign companies to heel. For that reason, it has invariably signalled dread in the hearts of these companies, among them some of the country's best known firms in fields as diverse as drugs and tea, soap and electronics.

Last month, nine years after the Act was passed by Parliament, the Government decided to allow the biggest company of them all, Hindustan Lever, to retain 51 per cent of its shares in foreign hands, and the FERA saga was finally drawing to a close. It seems time then for the question: what has FERA achieved?

Controversial Move: IBM left the country because of FERA; so did Coca-Cola and 12 lesser known entities who chose not to give in to official demands asking them to Indianise and reduce foreign shareholdings. These departures caused major controversies in the world of international business and affected the perceptions of prospective foreign investors, most of whom chose to stay away.

But the vast majority of companies have chosen to stay. Of the close to 900 foreign equity companies in the country who applied for permission to continue operations after FERA was passed by Parliament, over 400 were unaffected by the new law. Of the rest, close to 100 have been asked to leave, another 230 were asked to bring their foreign shareholding down to 40 per cent, and 22 chose voluntarily to come down to 40 per cent. Only 114 were allowed to keep foreign holdings at levels between 51 and 74 per cent. A handful of cases, all of them drug companies, are still undecided.

By any account, it has been a mammoth exercise, seen by not a few as an effort directed towards gaining greater economic independence. Willy-nilly, any foreign company had to Indianise unless it was already in, or willing to go into, specified core sector industries, high-technology areas or exports. In the process ITC, the tobacco giant, had to reduce its foreign shareholding to 40 per cent, as did Peico Electronics and Electricals, Colgate-Palmolive, and numerous others.

But many others managed to retain foreign majority shareholding: Siemens, Dunlop, Hindustan Lever itself, Hoechst Pharmaceuticals and dozens of others, including most of the foreign tea companies.

However, with the FERA juggernaut nearing the end of its nine-year journey, the mood last fortnight—both in Government as well as outside—was one of stock-taking, assessing the gains and losses of a major and controversial policy initiative. Inevitably, opinions varied: some saw it as a worthwhile effort, others thought the whole process had been counter-productive, and a third section felt FERA had achieved but little.

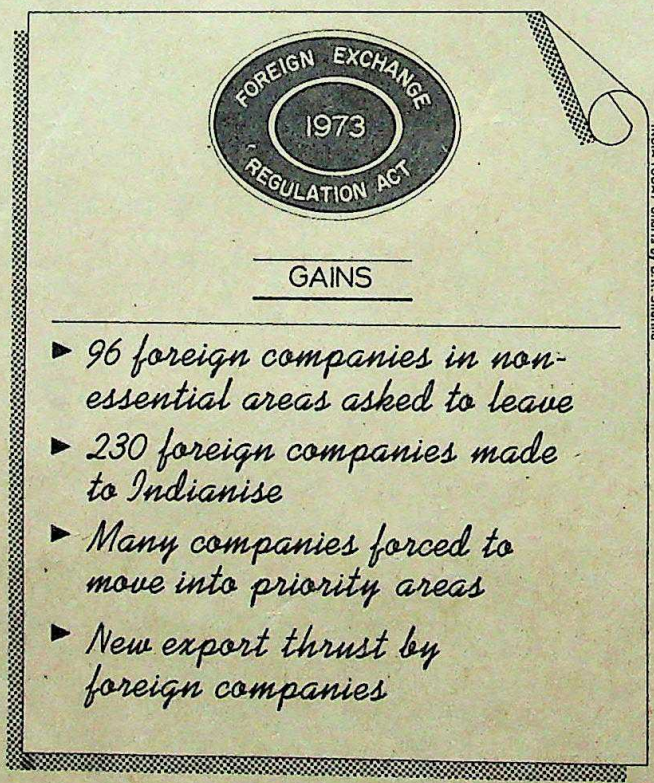
Benefits: The gains are easy to list: forced by the law to move into priority areas if they wanted to avoid Indianisation, many companies which were making crores as profits on items of, at best, peripheral importance to the country have either reduced foreign shareholding or diversified into chemicals, marine fishing and basic drugs. Others have been coerced into mounting a major export effort to stay in business.

Explained a spokesman of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) which handles the implementation of FERA: "The most important aim of FERA was that we should allow major foreign participation only w accompanied by high technology, import substitution or research. FERA, there was no regulation of on foreign company investments, were in areas of business whic companies could handle just as we foreign exchange outgo on their o was not very necessary."

Nitish Sengupta of the Finan try adds that the forced shift int industries and exports has been a gain for the country". He cites of Chloride India (Exide batteries has stepped up exports from Rs few years ago to Rs 9 crore now Hindustan Lever, which has increas ports from Rs 8 crore in Rs 70 crore last year. L simultaneously moved fr and toiletries to a higher item like chemicals and the import of mutton t soap-making by developing of domestically available oils (otherwise going w suitable raw material.

Losses: But the failu been no less noteworthy the reduction in foreign s ing in scores of compa foreign exchange outgo o of many of these foreign c has gone up, instead o down. L.K. Jha, adviser-t the prime minister, did personal study of three panies recently and foun all three cases, including foreign exchange outgo ha ed sharply after dilution equity holding. Jha ar the basic assumptions be were wrong on a nu counts: remittances by c which diluted had gone up cases because they had dilution not by selling off shares hands but by raising fresh cap Indian investors.

Thus, foreign ownership of s lined not in absolute terms but percentage terms. Further, with th raised in the country, they expan operations, so that profits—and mittances—went up. The figures Jha's argument: total remittances companies more than doubled, fro crore in 1974–75 to an estimate



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in 1978–79 (no figures are available subsequent years).

Management Control: Jha also argued reducing foreign equity did not in most lead to a loss of foreign control of the pany, since 40 per cent was sufficient se cases to ensure management control. Goyal of the Indian Institute of Public inistration buttresses this argument by ting out that companies Like Lipton, ebrough Ponds, Warren Tea and May ker had gone to the extent of amending articles of association to specify that gement control would continue to in foreign hands even if majority own- was Indian.

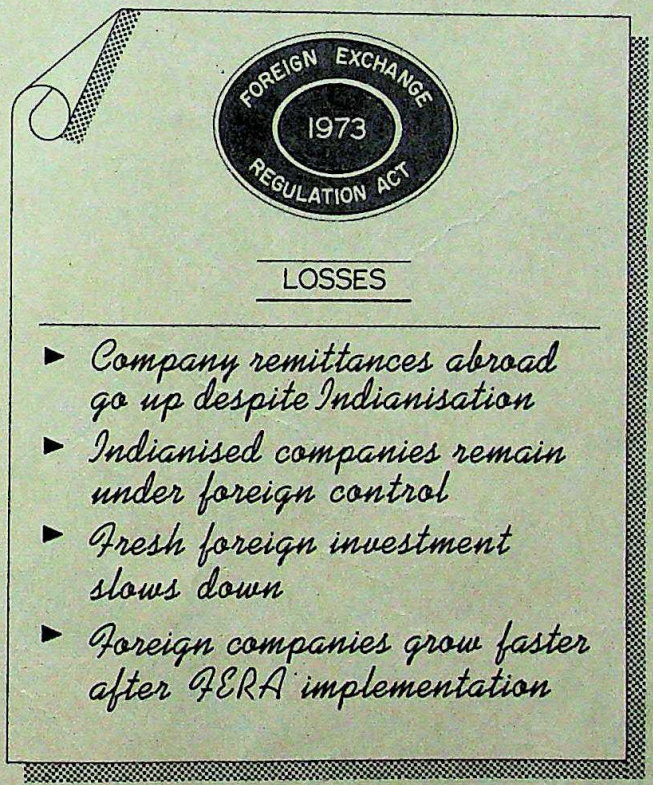
A third negative result achieved by has been the sharp slowing down of foreign investment into India, since the ption in international business circles hat India was now hostile to foreign ment. Between 1965–66 and 1972–73, gn investment in India went up from 0 crore to Rs 1,800 crore. But nine years since then, the ate is that foreign investment one up by barely Rs 500 crore ound Rs 2,300 crore. Now the rnment is actively trying to the damage, wooing foreign ors, and repeatedly empha- at various conclaves with sentatives of international ess that they are welcome in pecified areas.

There are still other negative s: under FERA any foreign any that brings its foreign holding down to 40 per cent hen be treated on an equal g with Indian companies, therefore free from the usual supervision. Many such anies have as a result achiev- paradoxical result of grow- ster after equity dilution. One le is Colgate-Palmolive. has more than doubled sales r years after dilution, from crore in 1977 to Rs 68 crore ear. Colgate was in fact d to substantially expand n shareholding by capitalis- cumulated reserves through the issue unprecedented 130 bonus shares for share held, and then to make a further ome profit for the parent US company ling shares to Indians at a large pre- netting Rs 2.94 crore.

The RBI, however, defends FERA by g that before FERA was enacted, com- could grow without any restrictions ever. Says an RBI spokesman: we have forced them to have 60 nt Indian shareholding. That is a step forward."

Varied Opinions: The companies, from their point of view, emphasise another aspect. Says a Peico spokesman: "Before we were forced to come down to 40 per cent we used to get technology and other help of various sorts from our parent company in Holland without having to pay for anything. Now, not only is the parent company less interested in us, but we have to pay for every bit of technology or service that we require from Holland."

While Peico sounds doleful, the irony is that many foreign controlled companies are beginning to view FERA not as the initially perceived threat to their existence but as a blessing in disguise. There is, in fact, the strange phenomenon of many companies who have been allowed to retain majority foreign shareholding now coming down voluntarily to 40 per cent: because that is the way to get out of the FERA strait-jacket and open the gates to untrammelled growth.



This is a third point made forcefully by L.K. Jha.

Dunlop, the tyre company, is now getting ready to move down to 40 per cent, as is the engineering giant Guest Keen Williams (GKW). Parke-Davis has a commanding share of one segment of the drug market with its chloramphenicol, but cannot expand production because this particular drug is reserved for the Indian sector. So the company is now diluting to 40 per cent, after which it will be as good as any Indian company and can expand capacity.

Warner-Hindustan, another drug company which has already diluted to 40 per cent, has been readying for rapid growth by acquiring one new licence after another. May & Baker similarly sees the advantages in reducing foreign holdings and is preparing to dilute.

Even Peico, for all its complaints about having been forced to dilute, is now reaping the benefits: the company already has a licence to multiply fivefold its production of radio receivers and is on its way to expanding other lines in consumer electronics as well as in lighting systems. Very little of this would have been possible if Peico (formerly Philips India) had not been forced by the Government to come down to 40 per cent. On the other hand, if the Government had accepted Peico's request to be allowed to keep 51 per cent foreign shareholding, it could have forced the company to bring in high technology in a whole range of areas such as medical equipment (an offer which the company had once made) and communications.

It has, therefore, turned out to be a strange dénouement: the companies which were to be tamed by FERA now see it as a blessing, while the Government, which thought it was being both socialist and nationalist, now wonders whether the game has been worth the candle.

Cashing In: Meanwhile, at a little distance from the main action, a few large Indian industrial houses have made some pickings themselves. As the multinationals have pulled out partially from various companies, large Indian houses have moved in: the Goenkas of Calcutta now have a stake in Ceat, the Modis have acquired control of Bombay Tyres (formerly Firestone) and Godfrey Phillips, and Vittal Mallya has moved in as chairman of the Indian Sewing Machine Co (Singer) and Cadbury India.

The Birlas have tried their own little game: John Wyeth and Brothers used to get its drugs manufactured by an associate, Geoffrey Manners, in which however the Birlas have controlling interest. Wyeth has been summarily asked to leave the country, and the company suspects that the Birlas are behind this move, aimed at enabling Geoffrey Manners to move in with its brand of antacid tablets to replace Wyeth's own best-selling antacid. John Wyeth is now trying desperately to stay in the country, and company officials even deny that they have been asked

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to leave —a fact confirmed, however, by the concerned officials in the Government.

NOT ALL foreign companies, however,have seen dilution to 40 per cent as wise growth strategy, one significant exception being Hindustan Lever which last month was finally allowed to retain 51 per cent foreign shareholding. Says Lever director P.M. Sinha: "Even at 40 per cent foreign shareholding, we would be a large, highly visible company with important foreign connections. And if we started using the freedom available at 40 per cent to make large profits on trading or other non-essential activity, there would at some stage be increasing criticism. The safer course in the long-term view lies in concentrating on core areas, exports, and high-technology industries. That way, we are making an obvious contribution, and it becomes less easy to criticise the company."

Other considerations also weighed with Lever: dilution to 40 per cent could lay the company open to a stock market raid by an Indian entrepreneur, and the company would then change character by ceasing to be professionally managed. Also, says Sinha, "Staying at 51 per cent, we are a direct subsidiary of Unilever and therefore have free access to technology from abroad. In fact, some of the breakthroughs we have been able to make here in using non-edible oils as raw material for soapmaking is built on basic work done in other Unilever companies."

Lever is one of the few companies which has consciously moved into the core sector and exports in order to qualify under FERA for foreign majority shareholding. Most others who have been allowed to stay at or above 51 per cent were already in core sector or high-technology areas.

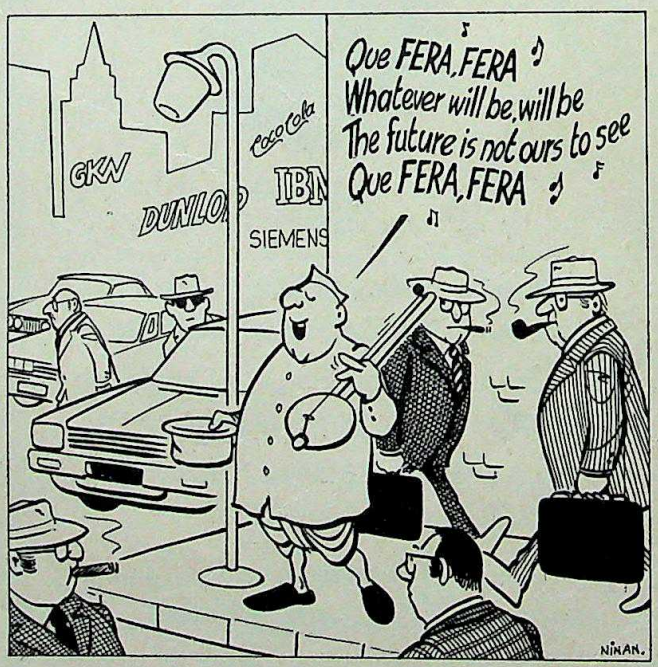
Siemens, for instance, was already in the core sector. But in order to keep majority foreign shareholding, the company had to divest Rs 45 crore worth of trading activity (since an FERA company cannot have trading activity beyond a very limited quantity). This meant reducing the total turnover, but profits have nevertheless gone up. And if the company now has a complaint, it is that the logic of staying under FERA restrictions is not being followed up by giving the company opportunities to grow in the desired areas. Says Executive Director D. Briese: "We have taken a very positive approach to FERA. What we need now is to get help from the Government so that we can at least grow in the core sector, which FERA encourages."

Flexible Approach: Essentially, Lever's thinking is now shared by many in the Government: it is better to allow a company to stay at 51 per cent, keep tabs on it and force it to enter priority industries rather than forcibly bring about nominal Indianisation only to let the company concerned stay under foreign control and free of domestic restrictions. Unlike a few years ago, when companies were forced willy-nilly to dilute to 40 per cent, recent months have seen a series of decisions allowing companies to stay at 51 per cent.

L.K. Jha is widely suspected to have suggested, in his note on the subject to the prime minister, that some fresh initiative should be taken on the overall subject of foreign companies. But this balloon was officially pricked last fortnight in Parliament when the Government denied any move to change its FERA policy.

Nevertheless, officials concede that companies which want to climb back to 51 per cent (and therefore get back under FERA control) can technically apply with a suitable project proposal, and that the Government would treat such applications on a case-by-case basis.

Indian Oxygen, in fact, could well have become the first company to try this approach. Forced to come down to 40 per cent some time back, it offered fresh technology recently in a bid to get back to 51 per cent. The Government was sounded informally when the chairman of British Oxygen, the parent company, came visiting. But this has not been followed up with any formal application, and the company has presumably dropped whatever plans it had.



Little Control: Others, meanwh raising questions in the opposite di could FERA have been expected to very much at all? Says Goyal of the Institute of Public Administration people say that foreign exchange ou not come down under FERA, could been otherwise? As much as 85 per such outgo is on account of raw imports, much of it bought from th company abroad. Now you control outflow, which is only 5 per cen total, but have no control of th important ways in which foreign e goes out."

Taking the argument further says transactions with parent co abroad raise the possibility of trans ing practices: buy imports dear, so th money is transferred to the parent co than legitimately warranted, or sell cheap to the parent company, so t money comes in from the parent co This is a common allegation levelled transnational corporations, but one to prove.

In India, however, th three clear cases where companies' subsidiaries ha proved to have indulged practice. The best documen is that of Philips India (now which was shown by the polies Commission in 1974 ing sold its exports at 30 t cent less than the cost of tion. Two other cases, docu by Parliament's Public A Committee (PAC) are of th puter companies IBM and

Useful Measure: Whil such as these raise fund questions about the opera foreign companies—pos covered by FERA—and w government now wonders FERA has been a worthwhi the more balanced ju would be that despite all t tive and unexpected resul law, there have undenia major benefits.

Numerous companies whose in the country were of little real va been made to leave, and many oth been encouraged to move into in dustries or earn foreign exchange by ing exports. Time will tell what FERA It could not do all it wished and differs on how useful it was. But if it something it was to bring order to an pattern of foreign equity holding in itself is achievement enough.

T.N. NINAN with CHANDER UD

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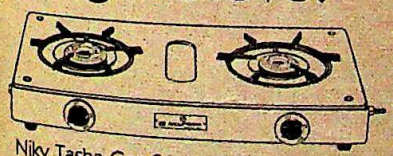

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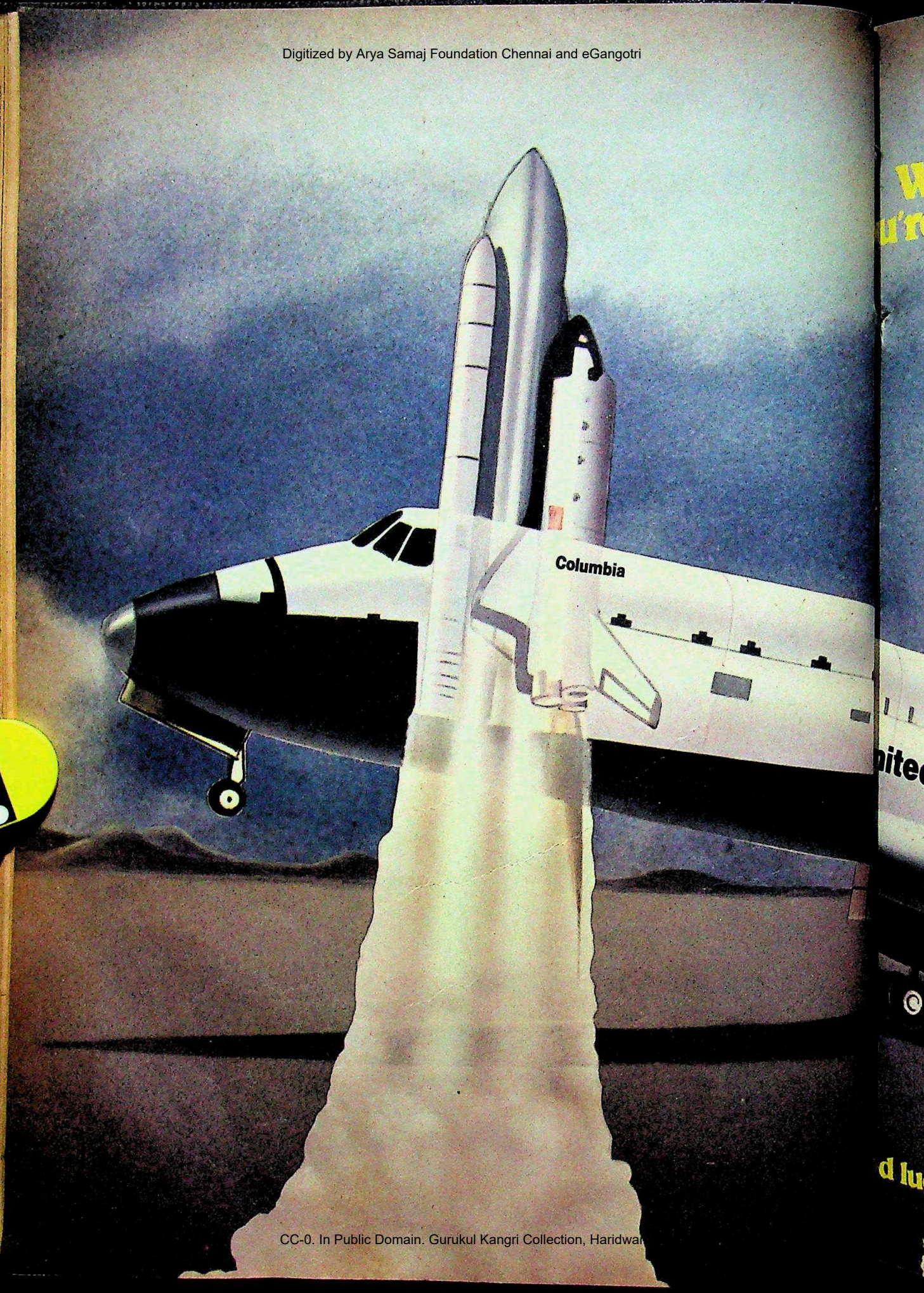

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d luck, NASA. Good show, Goodrich.

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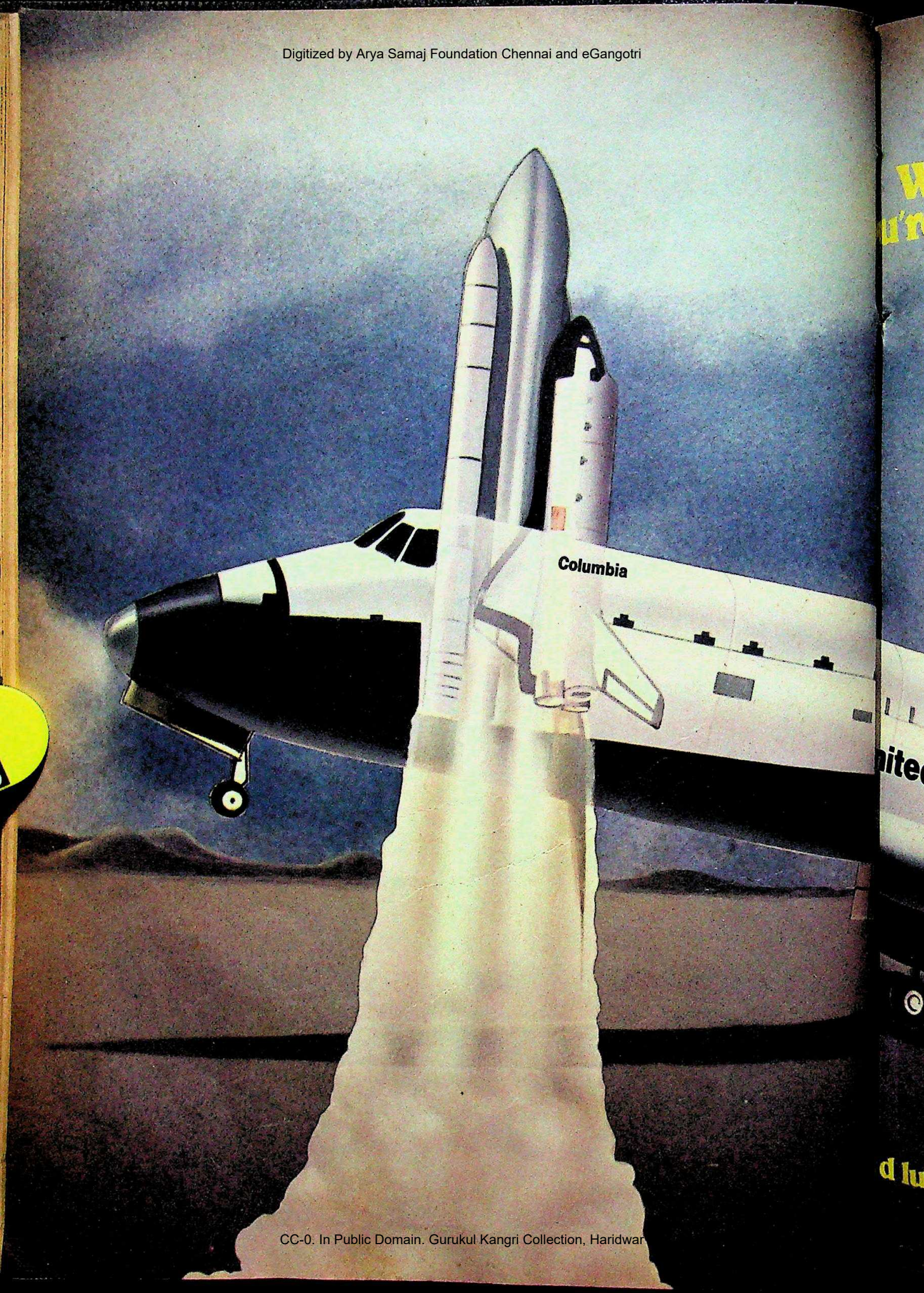

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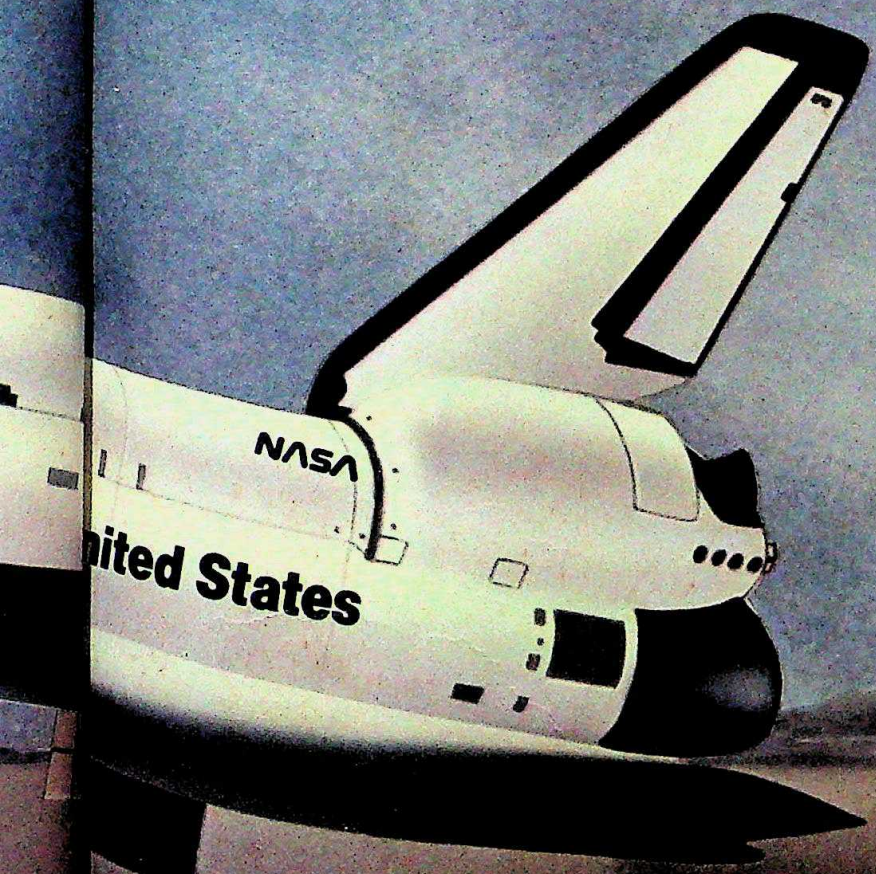

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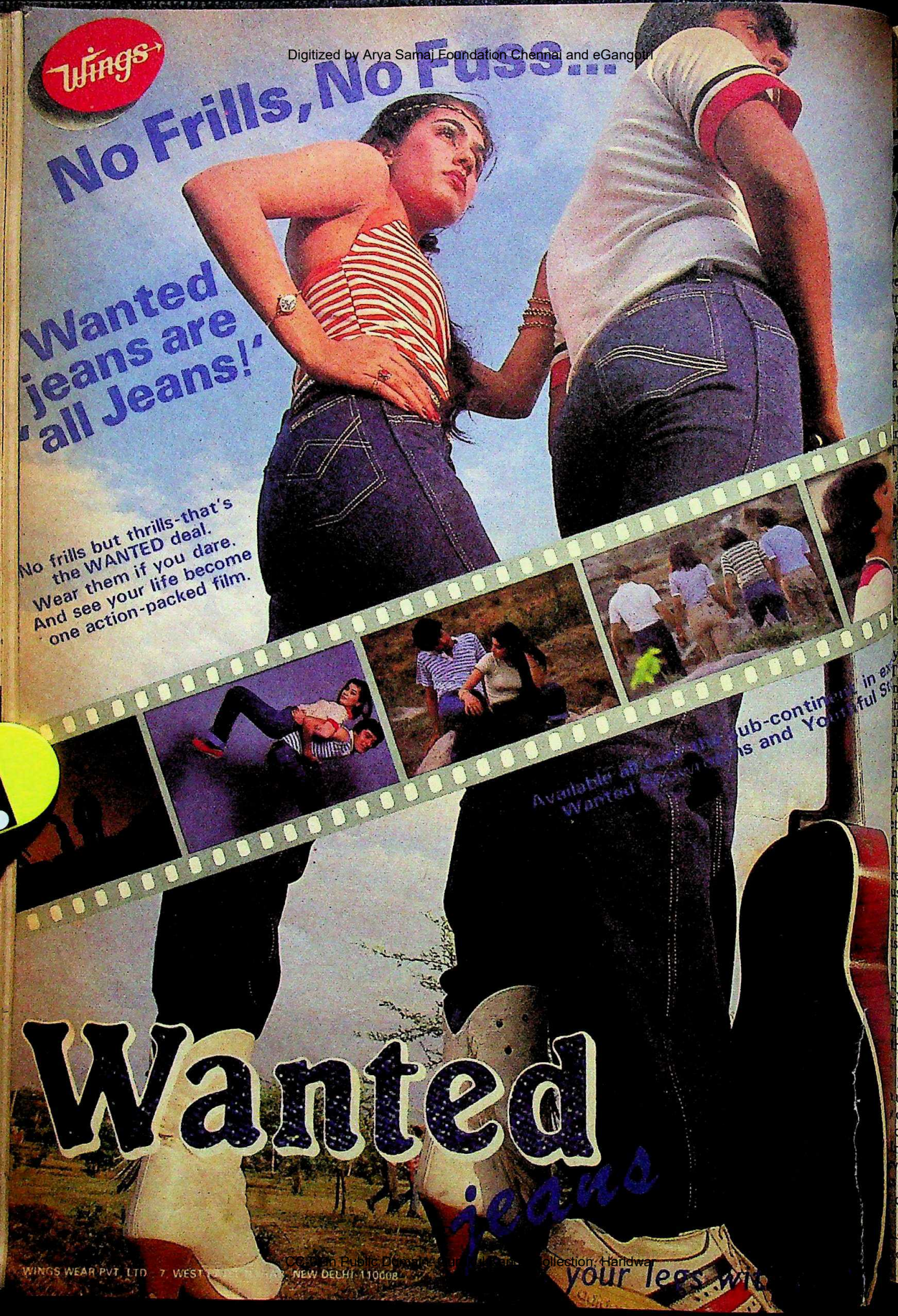

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itter Sweet Harvest

WHEN the sugarcane crushing season finally started drawing to a close last fortnight, India's sugar production figures stood at time high. Vastly outstripping even the ear of 1977–78, when sugar mills in the try churned out 64.5 lakh tonnes of the ner, sugar production by mid-July ossed the 84 lakh tonnes mark and ial estimates placed the final figure at kh tonnes. In the process, India had aken global sugar leader Brazil to be the largest manufacturer in the world, almost 16 per cent of world production ntrated in its hands.

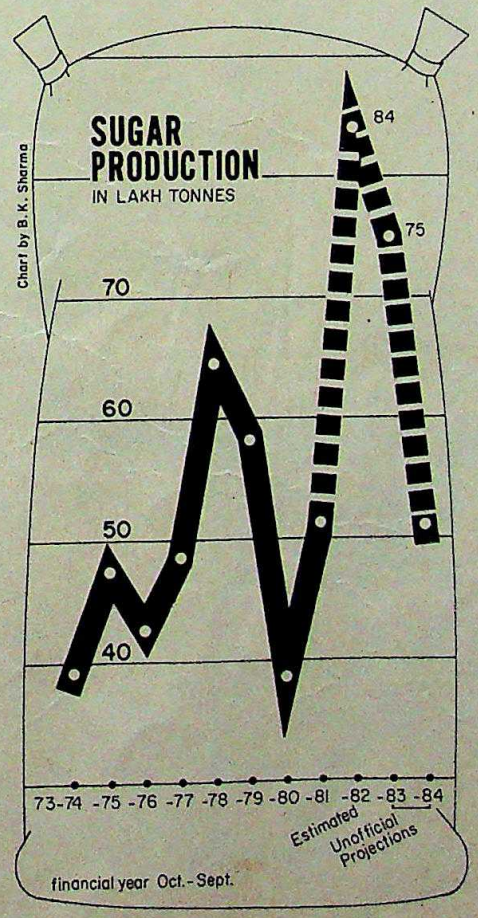
The figures surpassed all projections. At 32 lakh hectares, the country's sugar- acreage had beaten all previous re- giving the lie to conservative govern- estimates, cane production touched heights of 200 million tonnes; by last unsold stocks with the sugar factories ed 53 lakh tonnes, more than last year's production; even "cane arrears", the owed by sugar factories to the cane er, had hit the record level of Rs 200 Previous years have never seen arrears yments exceed Rs 100 crore.

The over-abundance of sugarcane in the n just concluded grew to such a level he sugar mills were forced to continue ing operations far beyond what is nor- Instead of the usual six-month cane ng period, factories around the cou- have been extending their operations April, and last fortnight the perishable was still to be exhausted in many ts. Said Shishir Bajaj, executive direc- the Bajaj group's Hindustan Sugar n Uttar Pradesh: "Our gazetted cane ement is 6.6 lakh tonnes, but we agreed sh 7.5 because of pressure from the unions. Instead, we have ended up ng 9 lakh tonnes, much of it at a loss se of low sugar recovery from off- cane, and extended our crushing by two and a half months."

yclical Record: Paradoxically, it is at me of plenty, when the country has e a world-beater in the commodity, he sugar economy is faced with its crisis. Intensely cyclical in nature, production in the country goes th- upswings and downswings unmatched other major sugar producing country: cyclical dips nowhere exceed 20 per ndia's sugar industry rides a perpetual er more erratic roller-coaster which production by up to 55 per cent in direction.

Each high in production has been followed by a four-year cycle of crashing prices, lower sugarcane payments to the farmer, and finally a switch by cultivators from cane to other crops, resulting eventually in acute shortages at the bottom of the production cycle.

In 1977–78, when an enormous glut took the bottom out of the sugar market, the newly-elected Janata government reacted in typically unthinking fashion: choosing the populist option which would push down prices and win temporary support from urban consumers, they completely decontrolled sugar. Prices crashed so completely that sugarcane sold for as little as Rs 30 to Rs 40 per tonne, and standing sugarcane in Uttar Pradesh was destroyed by cultivators who found it was not even worth their while to harvest. Predictably, a flight away from cane cultivation took place and two years later sugar production was at rock-bottom. Domestic prices of free sale sugar shot up in metropolitan towns to as high as Rs 18 per kilogramme and the country, for the first time in 23 years, changed its status from sugar exporter to importer for two years running, a stunning development.



Since cane acreage sown has not decreased, even the most conservative estimates place next year's production at 75 lakh tonnes. Assuming enhanced consumption once sugar prices fall next year, 40 lakh tonnes will still remain as carry-over stocks at the end of the 1982–83 season. Even with lower cane plantings at the end of this year, which will result in sharply reduced production of sugar in 1983–84—since cane takes 10 to 18 months to ripen—the earlier surpluses will still result in an estimated 22 lakh tonnes carry-over at the end of 1983–84, which will contribute to continued high supplies in 1984–85.

THE IMPLICATIONS are staggering. A 15-month glut in 1977–78 drove so many cultivators out of cane that total availability of the crop dropped by 80 per cent. A three-year glut, which many sugar manufacturers are convinced is inevitable, could lead to absolute chaos in the sugar economy. The Janata non-experiment apart, sugar planning in India has been riddled with short-term palliatives and bureaucratic vacillation. Refusing to adopt hard-nosed measures to stabilise the pendulum swings of the sugar cycle, successive governments have invariably chosen the short-term populist measure over the stabilising one.

A basic dichotomy of the sugar policy is the fact that sugar manufacture uses only 35 per cent of India's cane production. Surprisingly, the major sweetener used in the country is gur which, along with 'khandsari' or open pan sugar, and used cane, accounts for the balance 65 per cent. Since gur and khandsari are totally uncontrolled, in sharp contrast to sugar, which is regulated both for raw material and selling price, this unorganised sector is invariably the major villain in cane price fluctuations. Says Dr Shantilal K. Somaiya, managing director of the Godavari Sugar Mills, one of the largest private sector sugar companies: "The Government's policy is related only to sugar, which uses one-third of the sugarcane. If you want to affect the whole but you control only the minor part, you are bound to get in-built distortions and anomalies."

Complicated System: A complex system of regulations governs the sugar economy. Sixty-five per cent of all sugar production is taken over by the Government as levy sugar at an average price of about Rs 2.85 per kg which sugar millers insist is a below cost figure. The sugar factories are expected to make up this loss by free market sales of the remaining 35 per cent. Further, sugarcane prices are controlled by an almost arbitrary system under which the Central Government sets a statutory minimum price which the

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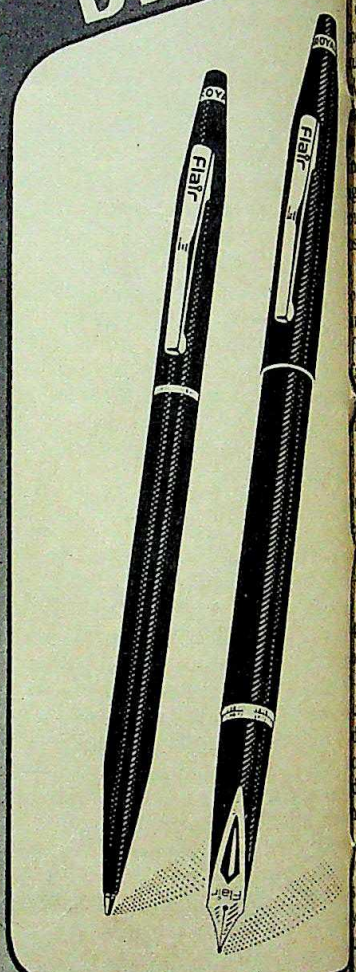

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them outstrip in their zeal to win over

the current year, for example, al-
the minimum price was Rs 130 per
the states ordered cooperatives and
sector mills which between them
e 62 per cent of India's sugar to pay
n Rs 200 and Rs 210, which the
sector then followed. With cane
cane purchase tax, excise and the cost
e other inputs controlled, sugar ma-
urers complain that they have no
over 93 per cent of their costs, and
x the flexibility to compete for cane

years.

scarce years, the gur-sugar dilemma
gerated out of all proportion by the
urchase system. Since sugar mills are
sed to recover what they lose on two-
of their production by hiking up the
f the other third, for every extra rupee
r factory spends on cane it is forced to
free sale sugar prices by three. Gur
facturers, faced with no such disability,
ach higher prices and take away huge
ts of cane which would otherwise go
sugar sector, thus accentuating the
scarcity further.

ugar production drops are thus exag-
d out of all proportion to the fluc-
ns in cane production. Between
-78 and 1979–80, cane availability fell
per cent, but sugar production drop-
0 per cent; conversely, while cane
ction rose by 27 per cent between
72, and 1974–75, sugar production
up twice as fast at 54 per cent. In the
d 1975–76 to 1977–78 too, cane pro-
on shot up by 25.7 per cent while a
sugar glut was created by a 52 per cent
sugar production.

ast fortnight, faced with the inevit-
of a cycle that is bound to get worse
action is taken, the Government was
sitting up and taking notice. As a first
re, a cabinet sub-committee decision
it clear that the Government would
maintaining a 5 lakh tonne sugar buffer
o curb the rapid drop in free market
prices. Additionally, the Government
ncentrating all its efforts on resuscitat-
e sabotaged sugar export drive—the
national sugar agreement allowed India
port quota of 6.5 lakh tonnes, and it
ear that India meant to go the whole

Said Sakhar Sangh Chairman Bala-
Vikhe Patil: "Remedial measures now
ot be delayed. We need higher levy
to make us more competitive, and a 15
come buffer stock which can carry the
ry through one scarcity period. This is
ly thing which can save the sugar
ny and pull it out of this severe cycle."

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

INDIAN AIRLINES

High Flying

INDIAN Airlines (IA) seems set to take off into an all-jet era, marking the most radical fleet transformation in its 29-year history. In the next couple of years or so, every second aircraft now in service will be phased out—and that will include all 12 HS-748s, all eight F-27s and five Boeing 737s acquired in 1971. That will leave 16 737s and 10 Airbuses in service—and a crucial decision on which new aircraft to pick as replacement for the retiring turbo-props.

The initial decisions have already been made: four new Boeing 737s are to arrive by September—before the Asian Games. But with passenger traffic expected to grow by 14 per cent or more annually, a decision on the acquisition of a new generation of aircraft has gained urgency.

BHAWAN SINGH

Chadha: aiming for the sky

Captain Kamni Chadha, who moved into the hot seat as IA managing director in March, estimates that IA will not be able to handle passenger and cargo trafffic beyond 1983–84 with its existing fleet. That gives less than two years' lead-time to get new planes—and time is running out.

Three alternatives lie before Captain Chadha: the Boeing 757, the Airbus 310 (each costing Rs 23 crore) and the smaller, advanced version of the Dutch F 28 (costing Rs 11 crore). Shifting to new wide-bodied aircraft has become crucial for another reason: fuel now accounts for 47 per cent of IA's operating costs, and more fuel-efficient plans are imperative if IA is to remain out of the red.

Last year, the airline was among the few members of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to make a profit—of Rs 10 crore. Chadha estimates that this year will yield a surplus of Rs 13 crore, but continued profitability will depend on phasing the gas-guzzlers out quickly.

Keeping Pace: So far, IA has kept pace with aircraft technology: inheriting a fleet of 74 Douglas DC-3s and a host of smaller aircraft in 1953, it moved progressively to the first new 18-seater de Havilland Herons in 1955, followed by the Fokker F-27 (40-seaters) and its first jets, Sud Aviation's Caravelles, in 1964. Then came the Hawker-Siddeley HS-748 in 1967, the Boeing 737 in 1971, and finally the Airbus 300 B. A good number of the 51 aircraft in operation today are outdated and consume too much fuel for comfort, hence the plan for a radical fleet transformation.

But with a new all-jet era ahead, other problems too remain to be tackled, chiefly communications. IA's perennial handicap remains its ground handling and its primitive reservation systems—the most visible of its operations. Chadha is aware of the difficulties: "We have been striving to improve our passenger services," he says. "We have recently introduced the facilitation cells at major airports and meal services have been introduced on all flights. However, a major area where we have not been able to do much has been reservations." This he attributes to the absence of a computerised real time reservation system, essential for any modern airline. Chadha expects a new system to be in place by early 1984, years behind schedule because the computerisation proposal has got tangled in an incredible amount of red tape.

Other communication networks are also urgently needed: it is not unusual for airport staff to frequently wait till they physically sight an aircraft over the airport before announcing arrival time. Says Chadha: "You cannot run an airline by such obsolete methods." So all airports are to be fitted with Very High Frequency (VHF) wireless systems, booking offices are to be linked with airports, and flight information telephones will be fed by computers that roll out the latest arrival schedules for all flights—the information to be updated hourly. This last gambit seems ambitious, and many in IA itself doubt whether it will work. But Chadha is confident, and says the system is now under trial.

Airline users, a frequently jaded lot, can therefore look forward to better flight information systems and a modern reservation network for the first time in the country, while IA itself hopes to move up rapidly from the present six million passenger mark to seven million passengers annually in little over a year—with better profits to boot.

—ASOKA RAINA

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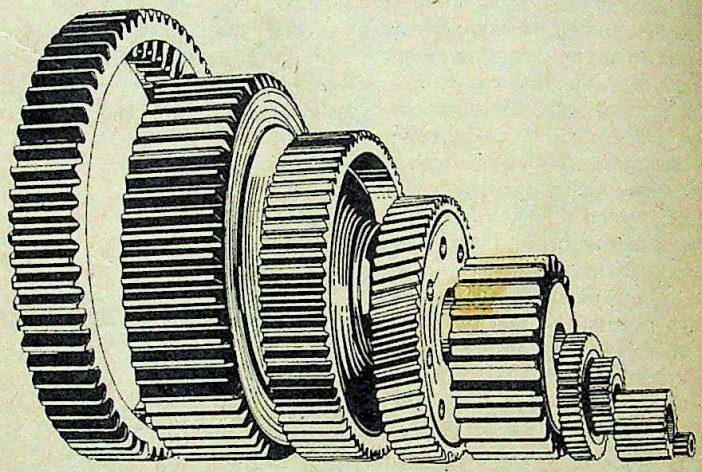

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hibition Bout

ANGALORE, one of the cities with the largest number of film theatres in the country, last month witnessed a blank reels. All 100 theatres put up ow" signs outside, in protest to an on the Karnataka Film Chamber of erce (KFCC) President A.R. Raju. The added fuel to a five-year-old cold war the producers and exhibitors of the film industry.

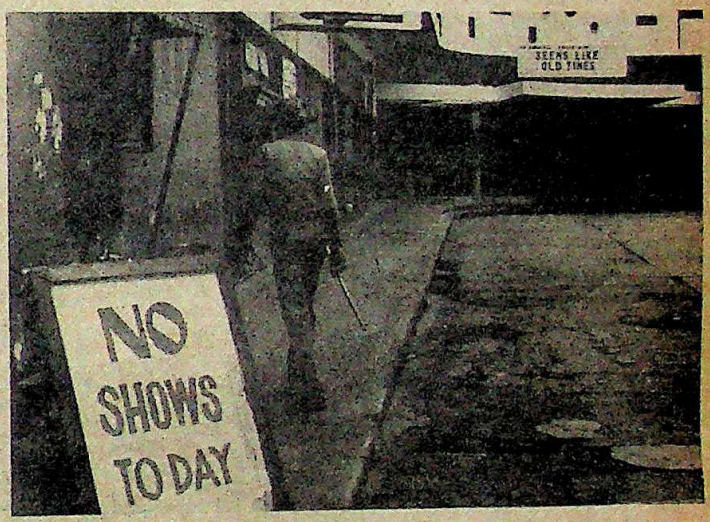
aju was allegedly manhandled by a of demonstrators in the Chamber's who were demanding better treatment nnada films. Next day, H.M.K. y, president and T.G. Aradhya, sec- of the newly formed Kannada Film ers' Association (KFPA) were arrested arge of assaulting Raju and were later d on bail. When the Kannada film ar Raj Kumar, supporting the KFPA ed against the KFCC's allegation, the on took an ugly turn. After a series of rawn-out discussions, the producers e exhibitors last fortnight appeared o an amicable settlement, in an at- to avert any major explosion.

mong a host of grievances, the da film producers maintained that main grouse was that although they he risk of making a film, it was finally ibitors (theatre owners) who walked h the lion's share of box-office col- s. For instance, for the hit Kannada *ankar Guru*, which ran for 52 weeks in ore, the exhibitor cashed in a whopp- 6.58 lakh and the producer netted just 60 lakh. For a flop like *Raithana* u, the producer had to pay Rs 4,000 to hibitor to get his print back. Said y: "It was sheer robbery. While we the exhibitors enjoyed the fruits of bour."

tate Confined: What added to the of Kannada film producers was that other language films they had no outside the state. Even in Bangalore, st profitable screening centre, hardly he 100 theatres run Kannada pictures. 78 films, excluding English, which released in Bangalore in the three s of this year, Hindi had the maximum 9, followed by Telugu 18, Tamil 16, da 14 and Malayalam 11. The going or Hindi films are much higher than ther language films. For example, an bh Bachchan starrer fetches Rs 16 the producer from the distributors as for screening two prints in the state five-year period as against a paltry Rs for a Kannada block-buster.

With so many language films in the state, the competition for theatre booking is fierce and Kannada films usually lose out in the race. The KFPA claim that most of the theatres do not abide by the 12-week mandatory screening of Kannada films every year by each theatre: a measure imposed by the state Government to protect the local industry. They also pointed out that the theatres hiked up rental charges arbitrarily and frequently increased the admission rates. The Government too, dealt a "severe" blow to the Kannada film producers when it chopped the subsidy from Rs 1.5 lakh to Rs 1 lakh for colour films and from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 50,000 for black and white. The producers were also dissatisfied with the 50 per cent entertainment tax exemption doled out to them by the Government and wanted it waived.

A.R. Raju: coerced into cooperation



A deserted theatre in Bangalore: cold war hots up

As a result of all these changes, the industry churned out a mere 64 films last year, with only a hundred of the 328 producer members of the KFCC active. The producers accused the Chamber of being dominated by exhibitors who paid little heed to their protests and in retaliation formed their own association on May 9 to fight for their problems. Explained Murthy: "Our intention was not to be disassociated from the Chamber but to form a united body to fight for our rights which the parent organisation is not interested in doing." But the real strength of the new association came from the industry's giant, Raj Kumar. Even Chief Minister Gundu Rao attended the inaugural function of the association, mainly because with the Kannada agitation still simmering it would be dangerous to offend Kumar.

Demands: Prominent among the demands listed by the new association was that exhibitors should share the box-office collections with the producer at a mutually agreed percentage. The producers claimed that the percentage formula would result in them having a fair share of the earnings if the picture clicked and would protect the exhibitor if it failed. When the KFCC showed no signs of complying with their demands they withdrew the nine Kannada films running in 22 theatres in Bangalore for a day in protest. The same day Raju was allegedly assaulted.

While the exhibitors supported the Chamber's call to close shop for a day after the protest, the distributors rebelled and formed their own association, demanding compensation for the collection they lost on that day. At the same time Raj Kumar released a press note, warning the Chamber that it was time its members "corrected their methods and attitudes".

The KFCC was initially reluctant to make any compromise. Raju denied that the exhibitors were exploiting the Kannada film producers. He blamed the producers for their poor performance in the industry as out of the 64 films they had made hardly eight succeeded in the box-office. Said Raju: "Unless they improve the quality of films the collections for Kannada films cannot increase." But with things hotting up, a harassed Raju was forced to accede to the producers' demand and finally said lamely: "We have accepted the producers' demand for percentage sharing, in principle. Now only the modalities have to be worked out." Although the exhibitors are bitter over the new formula being made out, they are unwilling to protest as they may have to face the wrath of Raj Kumar's fans if the problem is not solved. Now that the crisis seems to be blowing over, Raju dismisses the entire episode as "a quarrel within the family exaggerated by the press". —RAJ CHENGAPPA

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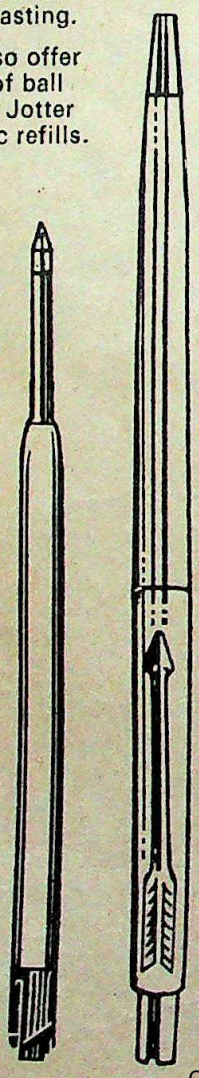

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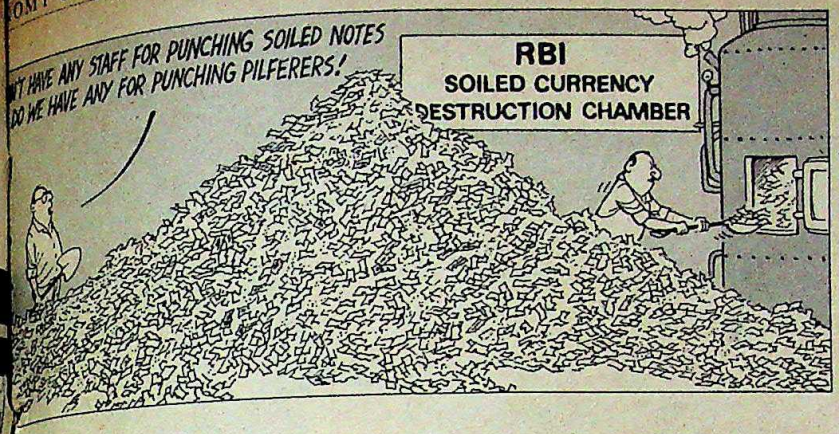

VE BANK

oney To Burn

F ALL the functions of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), there is one routine task crucial to the health of onomy: incinerating the mounds of currency notes well past their prime oviding the commercial banks with esh replacements. Last month, in an to clear the backlog of 'non-issuable —inevitable when there are over Rs crore worth of them in circulation ay dispensed with regular, systematic before the pyre.

nfortunately, it soon found itself with roblems: on July 8, Rs 15,000 worth ed notes was found to be missing from ed notes chest of the Naoroji Nagar of the Punjab National Bank (PNB), to charges that the simplified pro- encouraged petty theft. Also, the estive staff started protesting that the ure affected the work of the examin- ff at the note examination centres.

nge Backlog: Emergency measures, it ithout saying, were long overdue. On 30, when the quicker method was d, reportedly for three months, the office of the RBI alone had, awaiting ction, 26.69 crore Re 1 and Rs 2 notes, crore Rs 5 and Rs 10 notes, 1.74 crore otes and 2.35 crore Rs 50 and Rs 100 The pile-up was a direct result of the ort undermanned note examination s where only 6,000 note examiners and where there are already 1,000 ies. Only 15 issue centres of the RBI the awesome volume of currency in ation.

anic buttons were pressed. The banks their soiled notes in currency chests en by RBI-deputed officers and the are checked for quantity and con- When the chests arrived at the RBI centre, the note examination centres hrough the meticulous procedure of ng, examination, verification, and de-facement by punching. The new system dispensed with all this in the case of Re 1 and Rs 2 notes, and stipulated only defacement for other denominations. The resulting speed was immediately obvious: from July 5 to July 10, the RBI in Delhi destroyed nearly Rs 3 crore worth of notes, doing in six days what would have taken them a month earlier.

In the meantime, however, the PNB had discovered its loss. Added to the other pilferages that have taken place in the past, the new procedure nourished fears that the absence of systematic checks could lead to a rash of such thefts. Earlier instances include:

- the Rs 1.19 lakh found missing earlier this year from the soiled note chest of the State Bank of India (SBI) in Srinagar;
- the Rs 26,000 pilfered from the soiled notes pile of the SBI's Shadipur Depot branch in New Delhi;
- the three packets of hundred 100-rupee notes, out of 10 packets from the PNB's Amritsar branch, found missing in 1980, a particularly mysterious loss because the notes were in a soiled notes bin in the Delhi RBI basement and the bin was triple-locked: one key each with the RBI's assistant currency officer, the assistant treasurer and the bank's representative.

Scandals: RBI employees have been involved. A few years ago a currency officer and an assistant treasurer at the RBI in Delhi were dismissed when note pilferage was detected from the destruction department. Three years ago a coin and notes examiner was arrested for pilfering soiled notes. Similar scandals have been unearthed at regular intervals in the RBI's other issue centres.

Apart from the disquieting thefts, the RBI also faced opposition from staff. In Patna, after Rs 45 lakh went up in flames between July 5 and July 10, RBI employees staged dharnas and pleaded in the local munsif's court that the procedure affected the work of the examination, verification and punching staff; the court ordered suspension of the note destruction. In fact, the department staff, overloaded with notes, were examining only a few 100-note packets before sending the day's lot off for destruction. The defacement was, however, carried out scrupulously.

Suggestions: The solution, to some, is clear. Said an officer: "We ought to hire more note examining staff and put them to work on three shifts. Instead, we are leaving the door open for large-scale pilferage." Other suggestions include one to open a satellite office in Haryana to ease the work of the Delhi centre, deluged with notes from Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir; and to fill existing vacancies among the note examining staff. But the officers are reluctant to comment on the new destruction procedure.

Probably in an effort to still charges of petty thefts, the RBI in Bombay installed a shredding machine last fortnight to cut the soiled notes into pieces, which would be used to make cardboard and paper. A spokesman blamed "agitating employees" for the soiled note backlog and stated the obvious by asserting that the new procedure of destroying Re 1 and Rs 2 notes had been resorted to because these took up over half the bank's storage space. The RBI has obviously been forced to do a rush job—hoping fervently that more of the filthy but valuable lucre doesn't keep popping up where it shouldn't.

—CHAITANYA KALBAG

THE MARKETS

Edging Upwards

IS THERE a recession or not? Industry says yes; the Government says no; the truth possibly lies somewhere in between. In any case, the current slump in the stock market has nothing really to do with the recession, except in respect of half a dozen scrips like Tata Engineering, Ashok Leyland and Mahindra & Mahindra who have had to bear the brunt of the credit squeeze. In most other cases, the squeeze is only a distant threat. Company reports are by and large in line with expectations: Indian Rayon, a Birla company, has touched a turnover of Rs 100 crore for the first time and its dividend of 20 per cent is covered more than six times. Nirlon too has done well with sales and profits near record levels. In fact, companies that have not done well are those which have been affected by strikes and closures, but even then their scrips are holding well.

Actually it is doubtful whether the stock markets faithfully reflect corporate health. Bombay Stock Exchange, the kingpin of the

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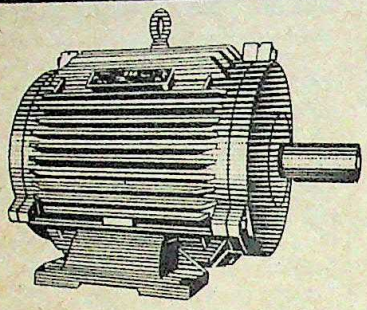
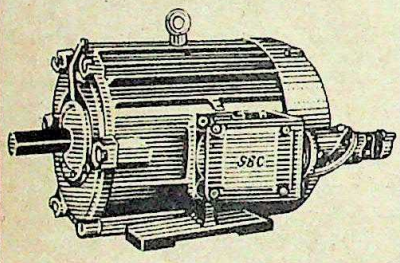
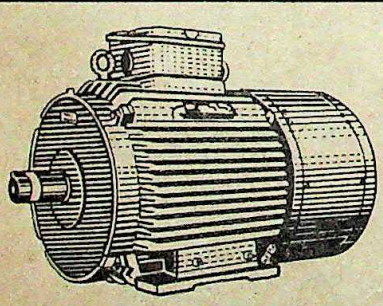


Loom motors



Flameproof motors



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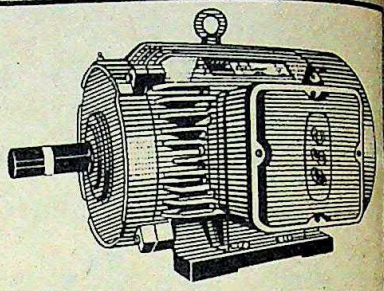
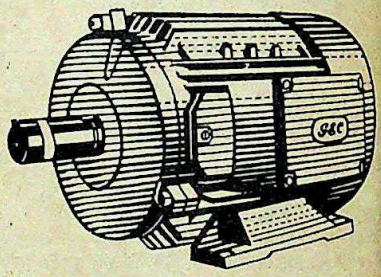
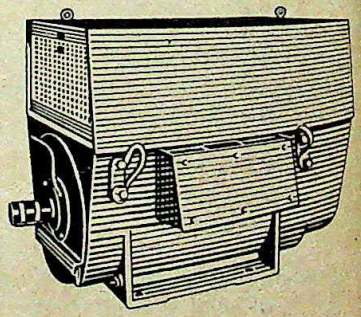


Kapak motors



Alpak motors



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ACTIVE STOCKS

	High 1982	Low	Close 19.7.82	Change on Fortnight
		32.00	37.00	1.00
ayland	59.00	212.50	267.00	(11.00)
d Crescent	377.00	46.00	54.00	nil
	64.00	1,275.00	1,275.00	(75.00)
ngco	1,650.00	36.00	39.00	0.10
	49.60	352.00	374.00	5.00
	467.00	26.50	32.00	2.00
Rayon	42.00	26.80	31.05	0.95
Gears	33.70	53.00	62.50	1.50
	65.00	62.00	64.50	1.50
ent	80.00	15.50	15.50	(2.69)
Dyeing	18.69	20.20	23.30	1.10
Paints	24.70	14.30	14.30	(1.20)
Rital	18.60	217.50	226.50	2.00
Electric	346.00	177.50	195.00	5.00
Mills	220.00	800.00	800.00	(183.50)
res	1,020.00	18.10	19.70	1.00
Spinning	25.00	41.50	43.00	1.00
k & Fibres	44.25	80.00	83.00	(1.00)
India	168.00	11.65	11.75	(0.15)
Dyes	16.20	31.31	32.56	(0.72)
Mills	44.50	18.30	21.25	0.55
India	21.70	16.50	19.00	nil
Hotels	20.00	26.00	30.00	4.00
	41.00	34.25	39.75	1.75
	49.87	35.75	43.50	1.50
pecialities	46.50	38.00	42.50	1.50
Nylon	48.75	25.40	27.70	0.45
Electric	30.00	30.00	30.30	(0.45)
Williams	37.20	368.00	410.00	20.00
Fertilisers	506.00	30.00	30.60	(0.30)
Aluminium	49.20	48.00	48.50	(1.00)
Lever	56.00	21.82	25.94	0.70
Motors	32.14	23.00	23.50	0.50
Dyes	28.00	17.00	17.60	0.20
Aluminium	23.60	18.90	20.75	1.25
Cable	25.20	172.50	200.00	nill
Dyestuff	247.50	20.25	20.50	(0.10)
Explosives	26.00	50.00	55.00	1.00
Hotels	107.00	26.00	28.50	0.50
Organic	35.00	26.20	29.10	1.20
Oxygen	35.90	125.00	146.00	1.00
d Rand	150.00	29.00	29.00	(0.50)
change	45.00	21.00	30.00	1.30
	30.00	28.75	29.50	(0.50)
Tea	36.00	55.60	58.60	0.40
nthetics	73.20	45.10	50.60	1.35
	54.00	110.00	110.00	(9.00)
Engineering	150.00	20.00	26.25	2.50
i (Madras)	35.75	45.50	47.50	0.75
& Toubro	86.00	14.50	15.00	0.10
Cotts	16.50	38.00	43.00	2.50
rs & Mahindra	61.00	11.00	11.50	0.30
Rex	17.50	22.50	25.50	1.50
Iron	36.50	16.50	20.00	1.00
Organic	29.00	168.00	173.00	nil
	210.00	33.50	37.50	3.00
Paper	63.00	34.50	39.25	0.95
Electronics	48.50	27.00	28.70	0.85
India	30.30	58.75	63.00	4.25
Auto	97.00	303.00	319.00	0.50
	407.00	21.00	26.50	0.25
	29.75	33.00	33.00	(1.00)
	58.25	118.00	140.00	(4.00)
	177.00	27.30	29.10	0.30
	29.10	34.00	37.00	1.50
Fibres	66.00	41.37	46.69	2.00
	47.62	12.60	13.00	0.25
& Lawman	16.60	19.00	21.50	2.00
Chemicals	31.50	45.50	49.00	(1.00)
tinel	59.00	310.00	339.00	(14.50)
	429.00	367.00	397.00	(3.00)
	737.00	35.75	40.75	1.25
Carbide	70.75	23.90	25.25	1.05
Martin Black	28.10	24.10	25.75	(0.05)
	33.50	228.00	237.50	1.50
Agro	291.00	19.10	19.50	nil
	26.50			

share market, has been operating only fitfully, being caught in some kind of an internal civil war. The general impression is that the authorities do not know how to run a stock exchange and are only too pleased to shut it down on the slightest pretext. This time the excuse is that a bull operator has been caught off guard but this kind of thing happens all the time in most exchanges abroad. In London, for instance, sharebrokers are hammered out month in and month out but the exchange remains open for business nonetheless. A stock exchange which does not operate regularly brings a bad name to the market. If the present management of the Bombay stock exchange cannot handle their job properly, the Government should throw them out and get a new team that means business.

Indications: Going by current indications, the market seems to have bottomed out and most scrips are beginning to raise their heads. Among these are Brooke Bond, Chloride India (which has been remarkably stable around Rs 42.00 for months), ITC (which reached the year's high last week), Dunlop, Ceat Tyres and Indian Oxygen. General Electric has also done well possibly on rumours of a bonus issue. Even Gujarat Fertilisers, once the heart-throb of the Bombay market has crossed Rs 400 after a long time and seems to be on its way up.

The general assumption seems to be that with the price index edging upwards after a long time the credit squeeze is a thing of the past and there is now more money to play with. Deposits in banks are also looking up, which is a good sign. Money locked up in recent equity and debenture issues is slowly filtering back where it came from. Gwalior Rayon's debenture issue was reportedly over-subscribed on the very first day and most other equity issues have also done reasonably well. There are a number of debenture issues in the pipeline including Guest Keen Williams and Ranbaxy and operators report that the pre-issue response has been remarkably bullish.

The only fly in the ointment is the slow progress of the monsoon and reports of droughts in several parts of the country, particularly Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and large chunks of Maharashtra. There are also reports of serious setbacks in hydro power production as a result of late rains, and also of general deterioration in the power situation. A poor monsoon generally affects everything from foodgrains to industry and ends up with inflation. A little bit of inflation is not bad for corporate profits provided it doesn't get out of hand. The trouble with an errant monsoon is that one never really knows if things are out of hand until they are beyond control. But there is still time—for rains as well as hope.

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit	Currency	TT Selling Rates(Rs)	TT Buying Rates(Rs)
Australia	1	As $	9.6871	9.5895
Austria	100	As Sch	55.4493	54.8267
Bahrain	1	Dinar	25.4490	25.2622
Bangladesh	100	Taka	43.4463	43.1273
Canada	1	Can $	7.6267	7.5535
Egypt	1	Egp £	11.6619	11.5763
France	1	Fr Frc	1.4117	1.3921
Hong Kong	1	HK $	1.6333	1.6168
Indonesia	100	Rupiah	1.4554	1.4448
Iran	100	Rial	11.4214	11.3376
Italy	100	Lt Lira	0.6972	0.6902
Japan	100	Jap Yen	3.7900	3.7494
Kenya	1	K Shilling	0.8828	0.8763
Kuwait	1	Dinar	33.2897	33.0453
Malaysia	1	ML $	4.0921	4.0505
Mauritius	1	Rupee	0.8737	0.8673
Nepal	1	Rupee	0.7244	0.7191
Netherlands		D Glds	3.5409	3.5023
Pakistan	1	Rupee	0.7913	0.7855
Singapore	1	Sing $	4.4990	4.4468
Spain	100	Sp Pt	8.6387	8.5623
Sri Lanka	1	Rupee	0.4625	0.4591
Sweden	1	Sw Kr	1.5671	1.5500
Switzerland	1	Sw Frc	4.6261	4.5740
Tanzania	1	T Sh	1.0164	1.0089
Thailand	100	Baht	42.1717	41.7951
UK	1	Pound	16.6958	16.5467
USA	1	US $	9.6225	9.4900
UAE	1	Dihram	2.6045	2.5854
USSR	1	Rouble	13.0976	13.0014
W. Germany	1	DM	3.9243	3.8842

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo. Ltd., New Delhi and quoted between the banks on July 22, 1982.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

PRICES	Latest	Change on month
ET Commodity Price Index July 17, 1982*	246.8	3.2
Cereals	234.0	2.1
Chemicals	278.4	7.2
Industrial Fibres	178.7	(2.4)
Metals	346.7	16.3
Sugar	231.2	2.3
Textile Yarns	224.0	3.4
Vegetable Oils	278.9	(2.1)
Gold standard, July 19 (Rs per 10 gm)	1,640.00	(25.00)
Silver, .999 July 19 (Rs per kg)	2,580.00	(25.00)

SHARES		
ET Share Price Index July 15, 1982*	220.2	2.4
Cement	129.7	(4.1)
Chemicals	182.5	4.6
Engineering	366.1	12.0
Fertilisers	183.1	7.3
Man-made fibres	421.3	(13.3)
Paper	443.7	23.6
Rubber Goods	143.7	19.3

MONEY	per cent
Money Supply, June 4, 1982	1.1
Bank Deposits	1.2
Foreign Exchange Assets	(12.3)

* 1969-70 = 100

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THE KAPOORS

Filmdom's First Family

FOR 53 YEARS and three generations they have lived to rule the footlights of theatre and dictate the arc lamps of the cinema. From the days of silent movies to the era of multi-starrers, their careers jointly span over half the history of the movies. As the film industry's greatest adventurers, there is almost no aspect of the medium they have failed to master. Numbing success or numbing failure has further entrenched them deeper into the only act they know, the act of performance, and their tremendous sense of survival has made them the premier family of Indian film business which, with over 700 films a year and a turnover estimated at Rs 800 crore, is the largest in the world.

There isn't another surviving family like the Kapoors that has for so long governed the entertainment industry, or as assiduously scaled its farthest parameters. From being clapper boys to stage managers, theatre stars to matinee idols, motion picture producers to studio and theatre owners, proprietors, film editors and amateur musicians, they have run the entire gamut of cinema and theatre activity but have never given up their individual styles. Following totally disparate routes to varying peaks of success, being wholly segregated in their artistic concerns and commitments, they still continue to owe total allegiance to a common source of hero worship: their father, Prithviraj Kapoor.

Together the entire Kapoor clan—beginning with Prithviraj's arrival in Bombay from Peshawar in the north-west frontier in 1929, his three sons, their sons and daughters-in-law—is estimated to have performed in at least 300 films, produced and directed nearly three dozen, and spent an estimated Rs 30 crore on their cinema to date. There can never be an estimate of how much the Kapoors, singly or jointly, have earned through films, but that is because in typical impresario fashion they have made money to spend—to pour it back into their movies, share it with friends and associates and nurture the couple of institutions they have managed to create. It is not money that adds to the Kapoor charisma but the style, the overbearing conviction, the outsize vanity and the awesome prestige.

Gamblers: Even in a city obsessed with making the fastest buck, the Kapoors stand out for using money as a means to an end. Unlike many film stars who operate like money-making factories before shutting shop with huge assets and investments to last them generations, the Kapoors are essentially gamblers. They have throughout their careers funnelled their profits into ventures that are artistically as well as commercially viable. Where they do own assets such as real estate, they have tried generally to devote it to the cause of their cinema.

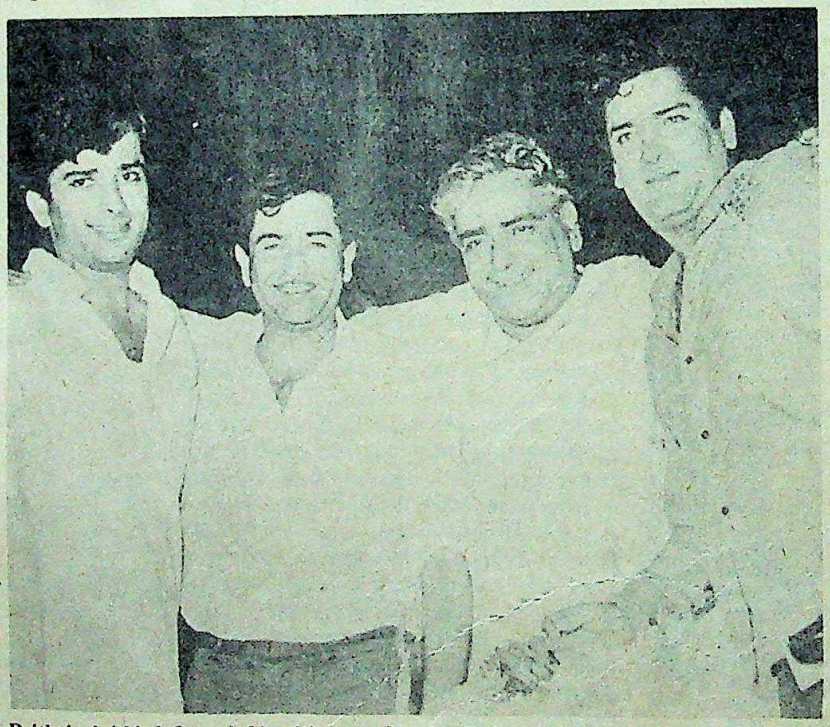
Raj Kapoor's profitable 100-acre farm near Pune is constantly in use as his major outdoor location. And Shashi sold his land in Panvel to help pay for his first production, *Junoon*. Their contemporaries, on the other hand, like Rajendra Kumar, Amitabh Bachchan and Jeetendra, mainly look for commercial profit. "There are only two questions that are speculated upon every day in the entire film industry," a leading film columnist pointed out recently: how much Amitabh Bachchan charges per movie, but the other more crucial one: when and when will Raj Kapoor meet his end.

Fiercely independent though they remain main in their separate pursuits, the Kapoors are intrinsically tog family. That g individually an a certain mysti se of togethe tradition, that successes of tainment ind hard to com Says film city's eternal chron yani Chaubal: not mere cine stars, they are lovers of the People like Bachchan and are ordinary comparison."

Great A their respective all three brot embodied a sp of glamour. A of their appeal do with their their youth, no herited from t who was an e good-looking rest has come from their obvio life—not one has ended up neurotic or cracked up complet tually become a dipsomaniac inherent intelligence, warmth and

Today, the only one worki tain a visual impression is Sh careful about his diet and is forc gin—beer, whisky or vodka being All the Kapoors have a great w drink—and it shows. Raj has yond belief from his classic '50s l Shammi, his gargantuan frame bright *kurtas* and *lungis* is beyon

Good food, beautiful women



Prithviraj (third from left) with sons Shashi, Raj and Shammi in the '60s: total commitment to cinema

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life have taken their toll and, ge-
the brothers have neither hidden
or fancies. Their romances with
adies have often been public and
y proclaimed by themselves. Their
or food has given Raj and Shammi a
as undisputedly the two best
the family.

spective and critical of each other,
easily uncharitable, they are still
of having great times when they get
Egos collide when one Kapoor
another, lurking jealousies and
are liable to erupt by the third drink,
subject of conversation hasn't cha-
their life. The Kapoors are nearly
e of discussing anything other than
their own, each other's, and eve-
e's: producers and prices, shooting
d dubbings, studios and recordings
nged as everyday family news and
You could say movies are in their
sweat and tears," admits a family

King Together: Yet the overall sense
an remains. "We don't like people
ad on our corns," says Shammi
the second of the three brothers,
cknowledged as the wit of the fa-
fact we don't have any." "We make
ends on each other," says Raj
, the eldest, who has now assumed
of family patriarch, "and we expect
either. But we stick together in
s of crisis as our father wished us
s the last thing he said before he

ne of their shift workers think the
is overplayed, and the worth of the
label fluctuates. Says actress Zeenat
who has probably worked with the
m number of Kapoors as leading
What's in a name? The point about
poors is that, being totally separate
als, they are all such extraordinary
beings. I've always found them fa-
to work with—warm, outgoing,
geable and full of fun. They're the
t people this industry will ever

an industry where the success
is measured by equal parts of
l charisma, commercial expediency
ain chicanery, any serious critical
eat of a family's achievements are
collate. Comments on the Kapoors
reduced to gushing cliches or cheap
e. "No one will say that Raj
's style or cinema is outdated,"
Bombay producer, "simply because
dying to be invited to his next party
part in his next movie." For that
no one will concede that Raj
's films are becoming progressively
s in comparison to his great films of

The Kapoors are not mere superstars, they are passionate lovers of the medium. If Raj Kapoor comes to his ruin, the industry will lose its biggest lover. In comparison, people like Amitabh Bachchan and Jeetendra are traders.

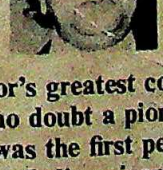
—Gossip Columnist DEVYANI CHAUBAL

The Kapoors, and specially Raj Kapoor, do everything big. Raj Kapoor is totally the big man: having been his leading lady I can quite honestly say that I have never been pampered more.

—Actress ZEENAT AMAN

What can I say about Raj Kapoor? He's a fantastic worker, an extraordinary friend and a remarkable human being. Whatever he does in life he does with a dogged perseverance and sincerity that is rare to find in the industry.

—Producer-Director-Actor DEV ANAND



Raj Kapoor's greatest contribution, and he is no doubt a pioneer in this, is that he was the first personality to really take Indian cinema into the international market. Along with Mehboob Khan, who was another pioneer, Raj went into non-traditional markets and created a major new territory for Hindi films.

—Film Distributor GULSHAN RAI

the '50s, or that as a man he is overcome with acrimony at being pushed into the back seat, or that his sons show little of the promise that he did at their age.

Desperate Need: Only his brothers or close family friends will gently point out his drunken rages, his cinematic compromises, his desperate need to be at the pinnacle again. "He is today a man who feels he has lost all that he loved, the beautiful women, the intense romantic lyricism that they motivated him to bring on the screen," says a friend, "Raj Kapoor now achieves eroticism by showing Zeenat's breasts or Dimple's hips or Padmini being raped."

Bigger than the man losing out, may be the loss of his studio, the only institution he has established in his lifetime. Spread over four acres of prime land in Chembur, R.K. Studios was started from the money Raj Kapoor made from his first hit *Barsat* in 1949. He began building in 1950, and the famous dream sequence in *Awara* was shot when the studio walls were no more than 10 feet high. Today, R.K. Studios with its four sound stages, its technicians and facilities, is mostly out of work, with producers increasingly using private houses for sets.

The exigencies bred by the star and shift systems—big stars shoot in bits and pieces over months so that constructing studio sets is worthless—have directly hit all big studios. Studios like R.K. are slowly becoming obsolete; their only hope of survival is to be able to mount productions of their own at the rate of at least one major one a year to be able to keep them going. R.K. has had to retrench staff heavily, its number of employees reduced from 129 in 1974 to 47 today.

Nothing has shaken Raj Kapoor more than this loss, but doggedly he continues to erect lavish sets for his movies, whether at R.K. itself or at his farm outside Pune which he uses as a location studio. In fact, the farm if properly fitted out could become a profitable proposition. Says Shashi Kapoor, who is busy planning to mount his first big movie *Utsav*, this year: "I know I'll end up shooting its most extravagant sequences on my brother's farm."

Being members of the same family has never encroached upon their personal identity, nor finally affected their professional careers. Though all three brothers started out slumming backstage in their father's theatre, each has chalked out a separate course for his life. Raj Kapoor, after a painful and protracted apprenticeship with old studios like Ranjit Movietone and Bombay Talkies, went off directly into producing, directing and acting in his own movies, beginning with *Aag* in 1948. Some 20 productions later under the celebrated

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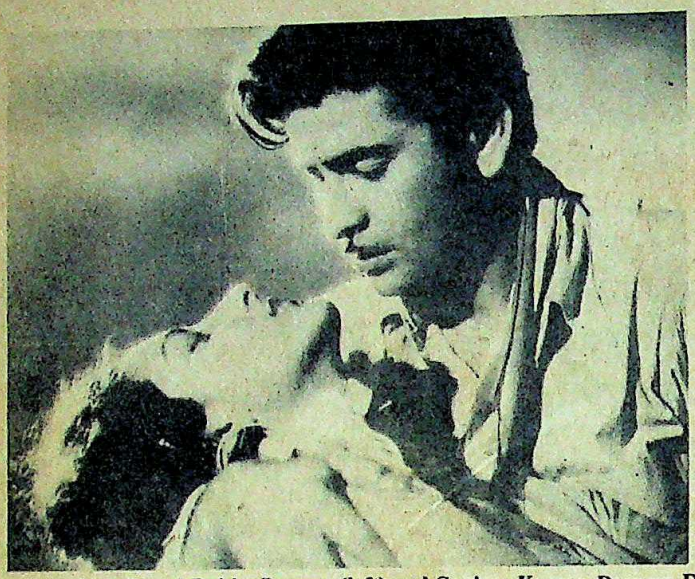

Nargis and Raj in *Barsaat* (left) and Sanjeev Kumar, Poonam Dhillon and Randhir in Raj's film *Biwi-O-Biwi*: film obsessi

'R.K.' banner, he is the film industry's oldest—and some would say most exhausted—movie moghul still in action.

Popular Actors: A great romanticist of the black and white cinema, a great lover of beautiful women in real life, and a huge success in the Soviet Union in the '50s, he has neither loved a woman lately nor made a great film. Yet his most expensive venture, *Prem Rog*, made at a cost of Rs 2 crore, is slated for release next fortnight.

Shammi Kapoor, 51, credited as being the brightest of the three brothers—he is the only one to get through his high school exam and be admitted to college—was a rebel star of the early '60s, whose hip-swinging, spine-wrenching rhythms on the screen, whose crew cut and raunchy comedy made him an overnight heart-throb, is today bearded, much expanded in girth but making a come-back as a popular character actor, having directed a successful version of *Irma la Douce*, called *Manoranjan*, some years ago.

His performance in *Prem Rog* is modelled on his father and bears a startling physical resemblance to Prithviraj Kapoor in his later years. And Shashi Kapoor, the youngest of the three, beginning with an idealistic vision in the theatre, playing Shakespeare with Shakespeareana, has been a highly saleable star in the '70s, but has come to divert his energy and attention to a theatre and a serious cinema (*see box page 126*) he believes will fulfil his true aspiration.

YET THE next few months may be crucial for the immediate futures of at least two Kapoors: Raj Kapoor, in his despondent moments before the release of *Prem Rog*, has been forced to admit that if the film does not succeed, he may have to convert his massive R.K. Studios into a warehouse and be disabled from ever producing a film again. And Shashi Kapoor, though he is briskly going ahead with his plans for *Utsav*, a primarily artistic multi-starrer which will bring Amitabh Bachchan and Kamalahasan together for the first time and also be his most expensive film so far at a tentative budget of Rs 1.2 crore, is overcome with last-minute pangs for *Vijeta*, which is being premiered on October 6 and stars his elder son Kunal.

It is a coincidence that both the brothers' releases feature their sons in lead parts and are vehicles that, to some extent, were designed to do something for both Chintu and Kunal's flagging careers. Though the Kapoors will never openly admit it, this promotion of their sons is a family characteristic. It harks back to the days when all three brothers in turn were given small jobs in Prithviraj Kapoor's Prithvi Theatre, and then left unaided to prove their mettle. For both Raj and Shashi, at this turning point in their lives, when their own future in the cinema is staked on their new productions, the element of vulnerability is heightened by their sons' chances.

In ordinary show business mythology, such a move would mean a transference of power to a new generation. In the Kapoor family, it is more than that: it is a carrying over of their own creative inheritance—from Prithviraj Kapoor directly to his grandsons—so that Raj and Shashi are conduits to keep the Kapoor charisma intact for a lifespan beyond theirs. It is another way of ensuring their own position in posterity.

Younger Stars: Still, opinion in the industry about the younger generation of Kapoors is reserved: Randhir (Daboo) Kapoor, 35, with his raunchy humour and roly-poly figure, had a popular image in the mid-'70s but is mostly out of wo... Rishi (Chintu) Kapoor, now 30, ... instant teenage idol when his father ... *Bobby* in 1973, has had a good inn... high-jinks juvenile lead since, but ... looking for another lease of life ... screen; and Rajiv (Chimpu) Kap... more rugged than his older brother ... makes his debut in one of his fath... jects, is happy learning the rope... Studios.

Shammi Kapoor's only son ... (Mickey) Kapoor was assistant di... Raj Kapoor during the making o... *Shivam Sundaram* but has firmly t... back on the movies since. And of ... three children, the oldest, Kunal Ka... was clearly a sad misfit in Esmayee... *Ahista Ahista* last year. He is now ... eagerly for the release of *Vijeta*, his ... production, to help retrieve lost g... fact, the only unknown contend... Chimpu in the new Kapoor swee... Shashi's daughter Sanjna, now ... unusual looks are backed by an un... determination to be an actress. Th... Kapoors argue that if their sons ... the movies, it's because like themse... earlier age, there is nothing else th... Says Jennifer: "It's all very autom... the children, it's not a momentous ... have to take."

Raj Kapoor, who is the on... moghul the family has produced in ... manner, sees a clear future for his ... his studio: "It's always been a ... artistes, and I believe the talent ... exists. If my three sons stay toge... see a great future for them: D... produce movies, Chimpu will dire... and Chintu will also direct. But I ... be the lord and master of the stu...

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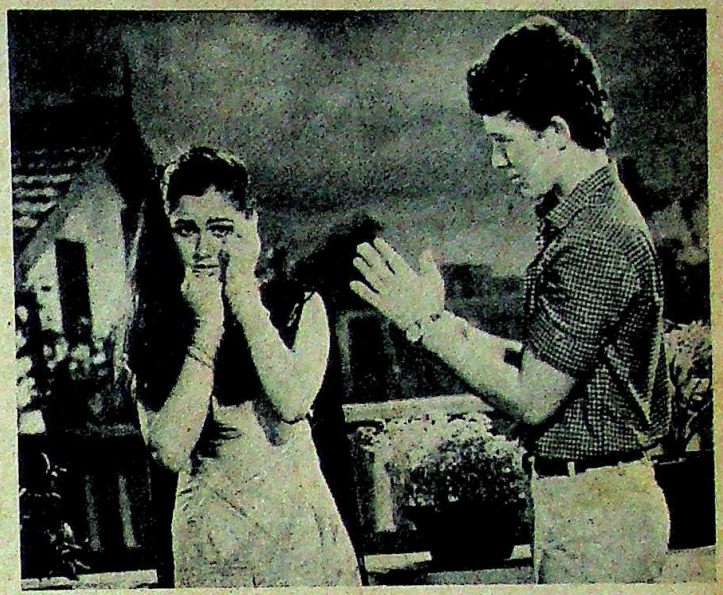

Jennifer and Shashi in *Bombay Talkie* (left) and son Kunal with Kolhapure in *Ahista Ahista*: promoting family

er in the original sense of the word."

rd Work: Nor is being a Kapoor rily an easy business. Each of the rothers clearly recalls the early humi- and defeats as Prithviraj Kapoor's aj Kapoor remembers his first job as er boy on Kedar Sharma's sets in he dingy Ranjit Movietone Studios r. He was paid Rs 10 a month and ually, lining up in the extras queue, a bonus Re 1 a day if he got picked er he moved to Bombay Talkies as an r Rs 100 a month, but was never used reigning queen of the studio, Devika especially wrenching was the blow another aspirant called Yusuf Khan ilip Kumar) got parts at once. After year's hanging around at Bombay he approached Devika Rani for a raise, and she coolly fired him.

Shammi began as a junior artiste at Prithvi Theatre in 1948 on a salary of Rs 30 a month. Quickly moving into his older brother's roles he established himself as a juvenile lead before switching to movies. He was immediately turned down for the role of Salim in *Anarkali* at Filmistan Studios, but when he began landing parts in B movies, every single release of his bombed miserably for the first five years. "It wasn't till 1957, two years after my marriage to Geeta Bali, that I got myself a crew cut, shaved off my moustache and made a hit called *Tumsa Nahin Dekha*."

Shashi, full of his idealism for the theatre after two years of travelling with Shakespeareana and a stint with Prithvi, was perfectly prepared for a life of satisfying if impecunious dedication to the stage, when he realised that he couldn't possibly support a wife and child on his earnings from Prithvi. When he began making the studio rounds, he remembers being dismissed sharply at Filmistan and told that did he think he was going to make it because he was Prithviraj Kapoor's son or Raj Kapoor's brother? He also remembers sharing a studio bench with Dharmendra and Manoj Kumar, all waiting to be cast in the lead for a film called *Picnic*. Manoj got the part, and both Shashi and Dharmendra came out miserable.

Long Grind: When Shashi did get a role by hanging out at Gaylord's restaurant on Marine Drive—then a potential talent-spotting joint—both his first features failed at the box-office. "It took me five years to get anywhere. It wasn't till 1965 that I was noticed in a hit called *Jab Jab Phool Khile*," he reminisces. But by the early '70s, he seemed played out again. "I was desperate for work, any kind of work. The children were growing up and Jennifer and I just needed more money." He was so desperate that he even agreed to fight a real tiger—admittedly with its mouth stitched up—in B movies like *Jaanwar Aur Insaan*.

Then, overnight, with a film called *Sharmilee*, offers began to pour in. Suddenly there was so much work, there wasn't time to stop and think. When Jennifer now recalls his flush phase as a fast-selling star, it is with as much trepidation as the bad days. "He was working almost round the clock," she says. "Both of us just sank into a kind of non-thinking state."

All three brothers exactly echo their children's phrase today when they speak of drifting into movies "because there wasn't anything else they could do". Today, Shashi's son Kunal says that it is almost

Rishi and Shammi in a tense scene from *Prem Rog*: spanning generations

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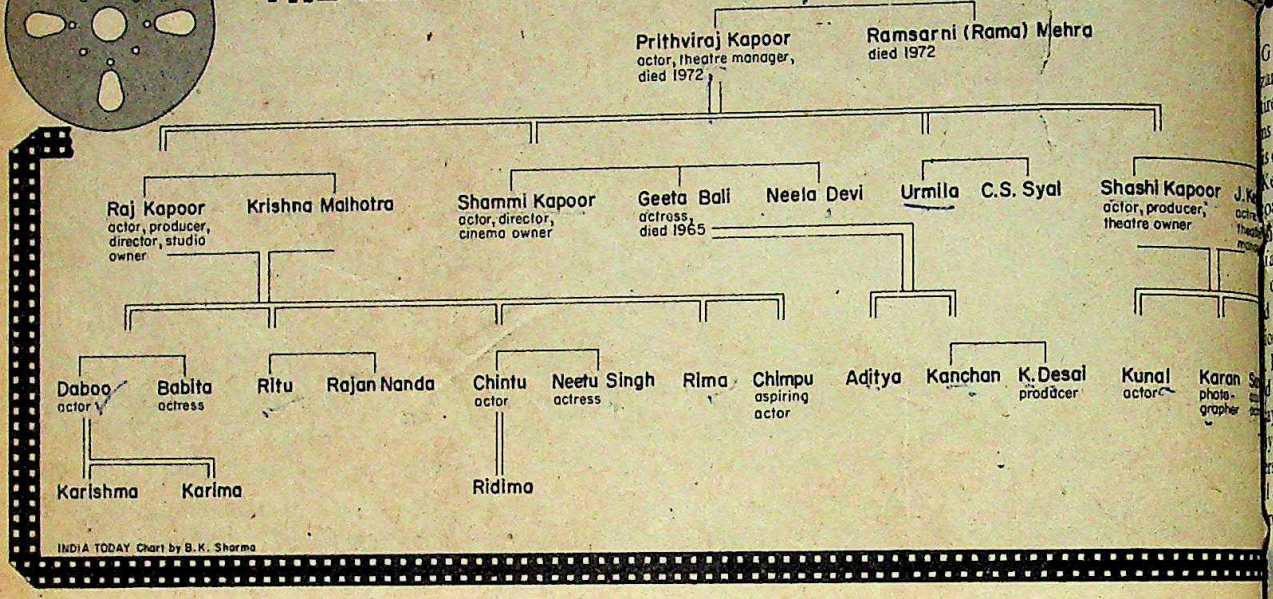
THE KAPOOR CLAN



harder for him to get parts than anyone else, "because when I go for tests, producers expect me to swing my hips like my father and be able to act like my mother". Equally tough is making the transition from being an established star to directing or producing a movie. Former actress Neetu Singh, now married to Raj Kapoor's son Chintu says on behalf of her husband: "Sooner or later he'll have to direct a movie, basically because he has no choice. How long can he go on being a teenage star. He will have to direct or produce because what else can we people do? He's not a businessman or trader; like all the Kapoors he's a movie man."

Strict Father: While the younger generation of Kapoors has the indulgence of their parents—like many other film fathers such as Sunil Dutt, Dev Anand and Rajendra Kumar who have all launched their sons—the three Kapoor brothers could never dare expect such support from their own father. Prithviraj Kapoor was apparently the hardest taskmaster, a man obsessed by his own vision of greatness, consumed by his own passions, and it never struck him to bring up his sons any other way except the way he had grown himself.

There were certain family traditions that he upheld so strongly that each of his sons is grateful today, for had it not been for the early tough time, none of them feel they would have made it. For instance, while each of them worked at Prithvi, it was customary for father and son to leave the same house each morning for the same theatre, the son catching a bus while Prithviraj himself was driven down in his brand-new car. "Each of us got married and brought our wives to live in the same five-bedroom flat in Matunga we had grown up in. But the moment we had our first child we were thrown out and asked to look for a place of our own," says Shammi Kapoor, "Rajji was expected to do that, I was, and later, so was Shashi. That is what probably drove us into movies—to be able to make enough money to support a wife and child."

Prithviraj and Meena in *Ujala* (1944): striking personality

Confidence: Yet Raj Kapoor, t... first-born, remembers close momen... his father who was only 18 years ol... himself. "When I started my first m... it was without any money at all. Bu... proper *mahurat* with a proper first ... all the paraphernalia of starting a ... remember my mother saying to my f... a sarcastic Punjabi phrase, that you ... *pakoras* in spit, meaning that I wo... be able to make the film without ... sources. He just turned around to ... said, 'You wait and watch. The ... make the film. He has the confidence ... conviction.' I couldn't forget those ... and haven't, because that's all you ... this business. But the point is that he ... in each one of us."

In a way, all three brothers ha... their lives trying to emulate their fa... the truth is that none has been ... compete with the law that Prithvira... himself, or been an achiever in his p... radical mould.

PRITHVIRAJ Kapoor was ... from Peshawar, the only child ... first wife of Basheshar Nath Ka... ordinary police inspector. The most ... feature about him as a young man ... looks: by all accounts he was spec... looking as a young man, over six f... body-builder and athlete, and endo... perfect features. The second most ... feature about him was that, belong... humble family, he had managed to ...

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e Cruel Sea

G elections is an occupational ard for politicians but to lose the ire constituency, and to the sea at ns to be taking things a bit too far. s exactly what might happen to 38 Kerala where 320 km of the state's oastline is in imminent danger of ed by the sea. In the past 50 years an Sea has laid claim to 3,500 of the world's most densely coastline and continues its ons at the rate of 30 to 40 metres It is feared that if erosion is not in the next few years the coastal y have to be evacuated and saline y even become evident in the lush s of Kerala with disastrous and economic repercussions.

arison of maps dating back to the backwaters of Cochin.

What is more, the Kerala coast is particularly vulnerable to erosion as it is of recent geological origin. Coupled with this is the fact that the sea level is rising by 1.2 mm per year on fairly steep beaches and this alone, according to N.S. Moni, regional director of the Coastal Erosion Studies at Trichur, can result in erosion of up to 0.4 metres annually. Moni adds: "At Trichur the sea is silently eating into our land and we are hardly equipped to stop it."

Moni claims that only effective protection can be provided by rubble walls. So far only 240 metres of wall have been constructed with another 80 metres coming up in patches. The sluggish progress can be attributed to the high cost of construction. Says C.V. Sunny, executive engineer of the Public Works Department (PWD): "To build 1 km of the sea wall costs around Rs 40 lakh and each granite block, weighing about half-a-tonne, costs between Rs 30 and Rs 35." N.C. Vikraman Nair, chief engineer in the Irrigation Ministry added: "The state Government is spending Rs 6 crore a year on coastal erosion and the Centre is providing a Rs 3 crore to Rs 5 crore loan assistance."

ar Quilon despite granite barriers: steady depredation

In spite of this the state has been forced to seek alternatives to this method. During emergencies sand-filled high density polythene bags are used to strengthen walls and to provide filter space for the rushing waters. Sand-filled coir matting has also proved useful and in Alleppey district they have been used extensively. The PWD is also planting trees along the coast.

Kerala's Minister of Irrigation, M.P. Gangadharan, whose own constituency, Ponnai is in the erosion belt, claims: "It is like an alien attack. In a few years it will leave us with no land to defend." He adds. "The Centre should give us more assistance to counter the sea. We spend Rs 35 crore in five years which is much less than our annual defence expenditure." But Simon Easaw, a fisherman in Cochin, discerned in all this the hand of divine providence: "You can never defeat *Kadal Amma* (sea mother). She sees that no one oversteps the limits set by her."

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

the present show that there are nd permanent sites of erosion. plicates matters further is that two different types of erosion at e far south and north of the state, south of Trivandrum and at respectively, the shore is laterite ve caves in leading to subsequent n. The sand beaches between d Cochin are being eroded by combination of wind and

There are other factors. occurrance unexplained by are mud banks on the coast formed by silt brought by rivers calm pools even during the weather. These, while being a boon en as they are the ideal breeding r fish, play havoc by interfering itoral drift. This can be seen at its urakkad in coastal Alleppey and in

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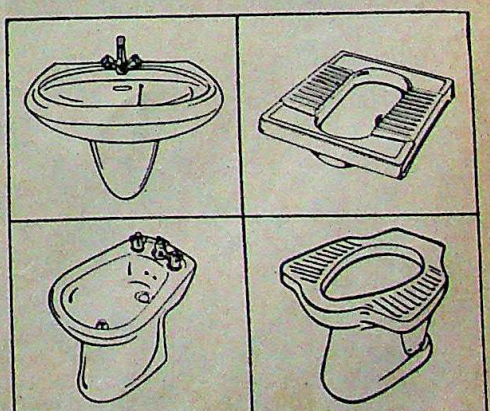
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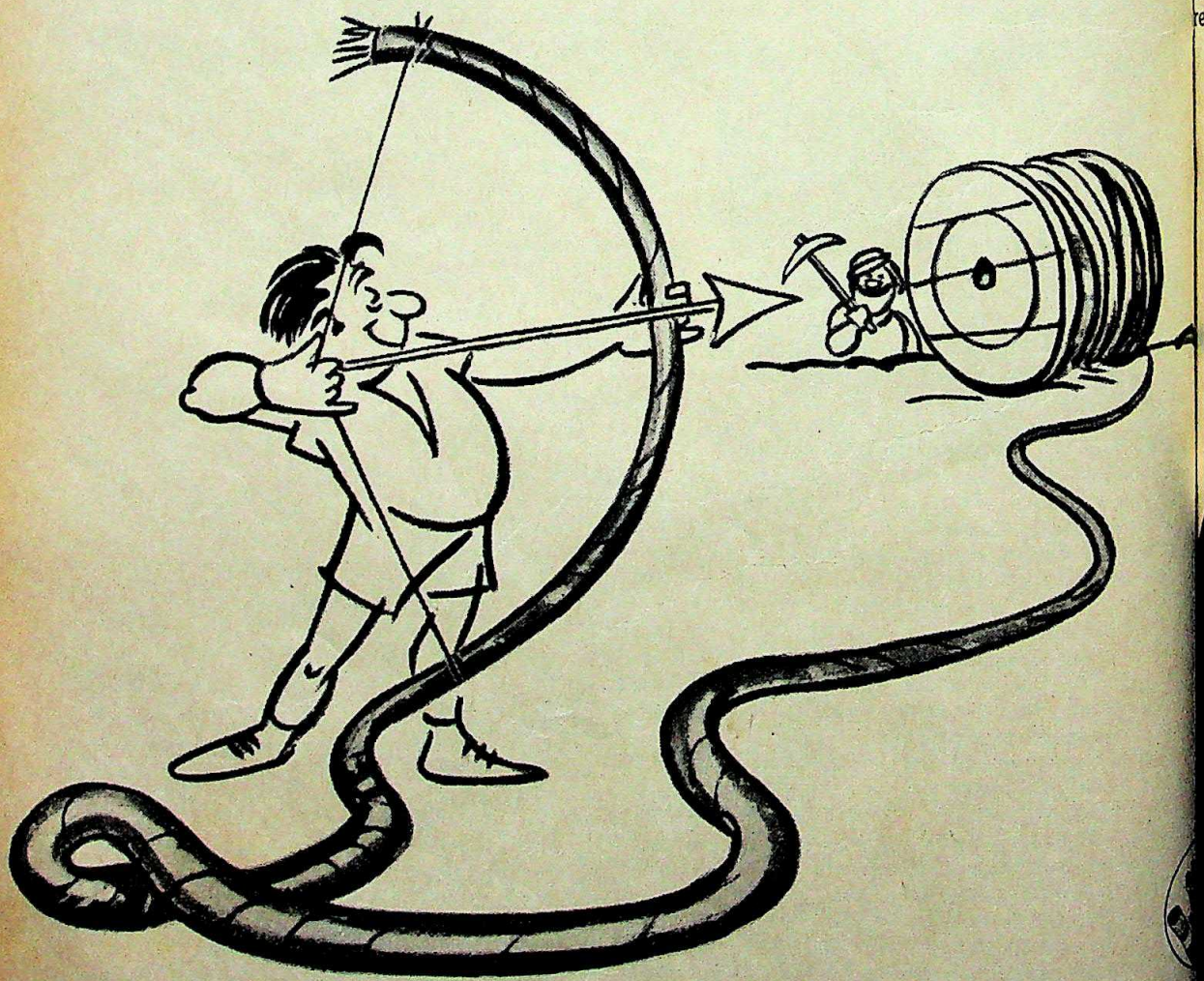

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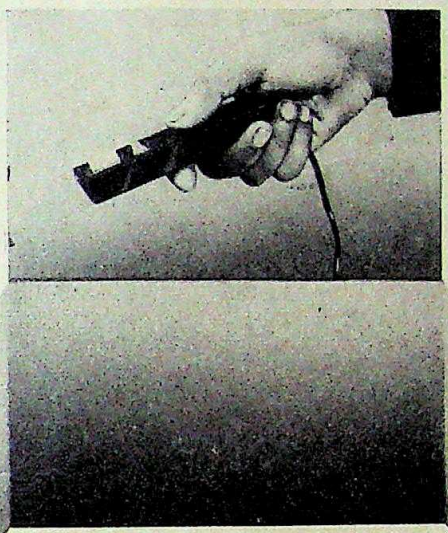

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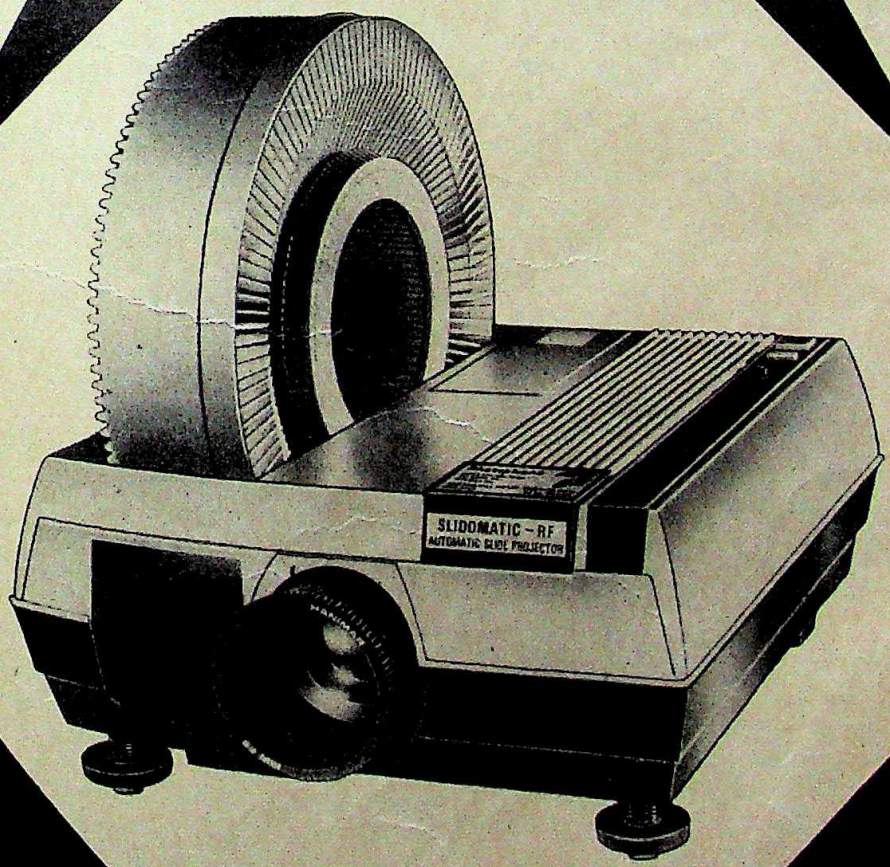

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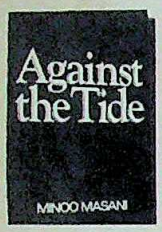
Vikas
Price: Rs 95; Pages: 402



"I HAVE never had any illusion about the fact that I personally lacked the political appeal of the kind that a country like India needed for the purpose. I had always conceived my role in Indian politics as an effective No 2 man who could run the machine efficiently provided there was a leader who had the necessary charisma. Such was the role I was able to play along with JP in the 1930s and with Rajaji in the 1960s."

So this is the story of a No 2 man in search of No 1 man "with charisma". But if Minoo Masani could stick to JP in the 1930s and to Rajaji 30 years later, why couldn't he stick to Nehru? This is a $64,000 question which Masani tries to explain away in the second and final volume of his political autobiography by saying that Nehru had changed considerably after Independence, that is, after taking over as prime minister, and had need only for yes-men. "Within a few months of Nehru's taking office as prime minister," writes Masani, "I began to notice a change coming over him. It appeared to me that he was losing his capacity to accept dissent. Either he would relapse into silence and change the topic or he would flare up and lose his temper. I felt it was tragic that after over a decade of intimate political relationship, this gulf should develop."

Rightist Tilt: A change was also coming over Masani. He had reconsidered his socialism during the war and was moving increasingly to the right. There were at first two Masanis—Minoo the writer, the artist in words and the juggler with statistics, and M.R. Masani, the one-time secretary of the Congress Socialist Party, radical mayor of Bombay and a friend of V.K. Krishna Menon. There was also a third—the *bon vivant* who was fond of good things in life and was once caught dancing with an Englishwoman at the Taj Mahal hotel and reported to Sardar Patel, not then his best friend. Masani was always—and he makes no bones about it—far too westernised to be accepted as a political leader in his own right, except at the local level. In old party pictures, he appears invariably suited and booted while everybody else including JP, Ram Manohar Lohia and E.M.S. Namboodiripad are in *dhotis*. JP too, like Masani, may have moved right but he remained throughout as homespun as khadi and did not lose the popular touch.

The book makes absorbing reading even if some of the arguments do not carry conviction. It gives what is perhaps the first full-length account of the rise, decline and eventual fall of the Swatantra Party of which Masani was the prime mover right from the start and its general factotum virtually to the end. He believes that the party, an uneasy combination of businessmen, landlords and disillusioned Congressmen—disillusioned, that is, with Nehru and his statist policies—would not have met with such success if he had not been let down by his colleagues (he mentions Piloo Mody who had their own axes to grind.

Masani: bitter

This is far too simplistic an explanation. The Swatantra Party looked like the natural successor to the vision of the Forum of Free Enterprise. In reality it was the first attempt in independent India to establish a truly conservative party. Masani and others tried to pass it off as a liberal party is a minor mystery. Ego is undoubtedly the reason why Piloo Mody and Ganga Saran Sinha, then leaders of the Praja Socialist Party, stayed away although they were approached.

In Limbo: It was also a drawing-room organisation with a mass base, a most unlikely body in a country like India. Starved of support at the grassroots, the party withered away and was relegated into limbo within 15 years of its establishment though at one time it was the principal opposition group in Parliament (with 44 members) and Masani was virtually the leader of the Opposition. This was in 1967. Seven years later, the party was dead in every sense of the word.

Masani might be described as a reluctant conservative. A conservative spirit might come up one day in this country, but only until people feel they have really something to conserve. A society in the throes of development has little time to think in terms of conservation. Even in England the Liberal Party came into being a good 100 years after the Industrial Revolution and offered the first real opposition to the Tories.

In India, the middle class has not yet become much of a force to reckon with. It will probably be so by about the turn of the century when India's own industrial revolution is likely to have completed its first half century. But politics has always been ahead of history. In politics it doesn't pay leaders to be too far ahead of their followers that they may not listen to their footsteps. The Lokmanya Tilak used to say and he should know, for he was India's first mass leader.

However, politics has been only one of Masani's several pursuits. For he is more than a politician, author, statistician with figures; his is a one-man band. He has been everywhere, seen everything, met everybody—the index lists over 1,000 individuals from Abdullah, Sheikh to Somerset Maurice everyone of whom he has known personally and whom he has dealt with touching old-world courtesy and friendliness—and has perhaps the most comprehensive index system in the country. And yet he is still looking for a No 1 man, a leader, a woman—with charisma to whom he can hitch his star. You can say one thing about Masani—he doesn't give up easily.

Extract

"The prime minister and her party had secured a lease of life for five years. It was also clear that she would use this majority to ensure her continuance in power and the acceptance of the authoritarian way of life in which she by and large believed. The Constitution would itself be in danger and, if the opposition parties and the press were shackled, what would be the price of democracy in a backward country such as ours? What we had lost, thus, was not a battle, but the war.

The credibility of the Swantantra Party, as of the other democratic parties, had been hopelessly damaged. We might have kept our hands clean and ensured public respect if, even at the last moment, we had broken away from the opposition **khichri** *(hotchpotch) and gone it alone, but we had got ourselves tarred with the same brush as the others.*

Our policies had not been unacceptable. We had lost because we did not work hard enough and failed to display the sincerity of purpose which was needed to sell them to the electorate. If at all there was to be any hope for the Swatantra Party, it could perhaps only be if the party chose new leaders, preferably younger men and those with a fresh image. That was why I decided to step down from the presidentship of the Swatantra Party."

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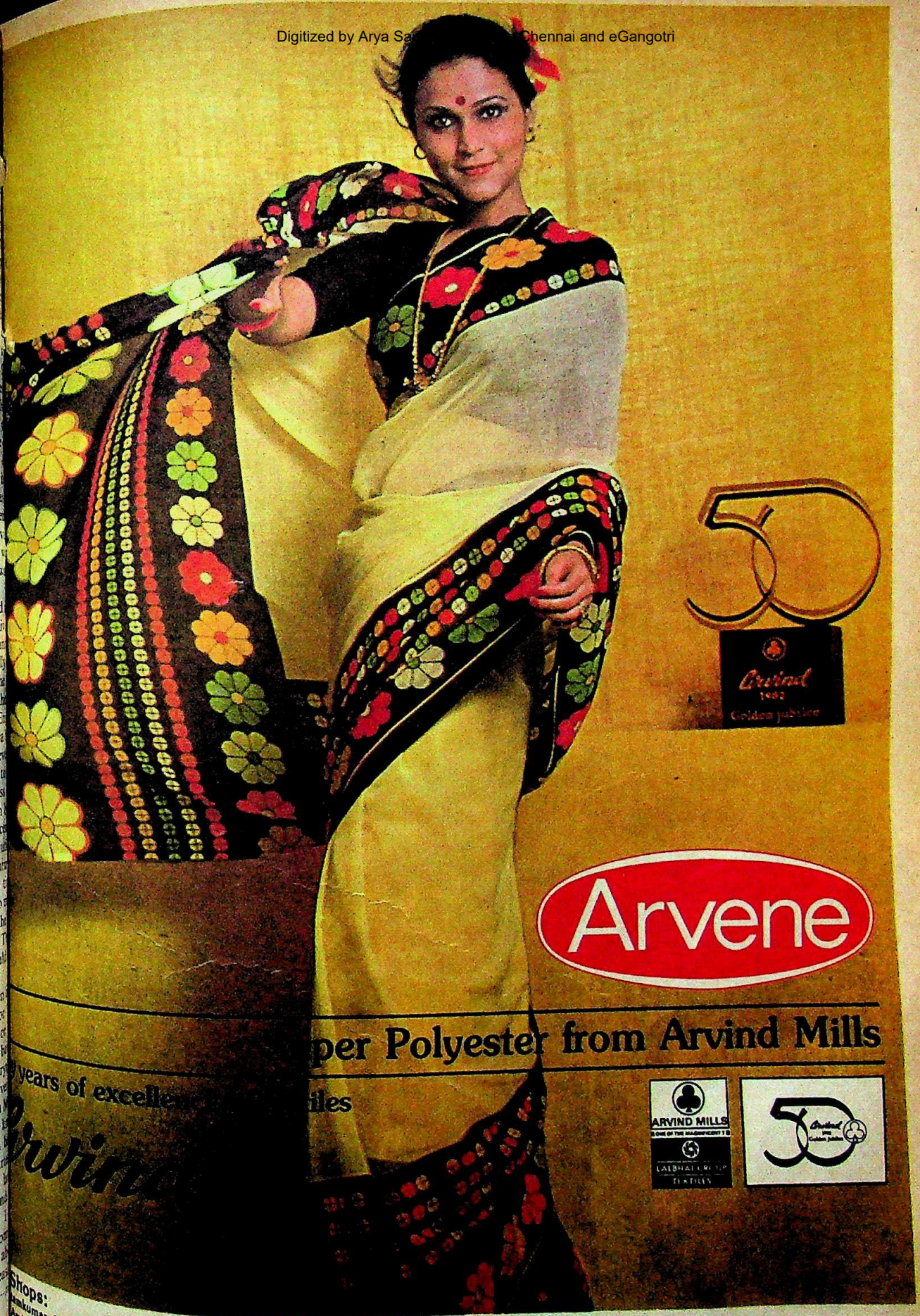

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TION

toring A Heritage

OUGH India imports a great unt of the latest know-how on art nservation techniques, art his- conservation scientists feel that n ancient methods is barely co- all. Major museums through the 've from time to time undertaken g research, mainly devoted to the emical and geological analysis of ical and ethnographical findings the various techniques used on es. But as Om Prakash Agrawal, ector of the National Research for Conservation (NRLC) put it: iecing the past with a few pieces

RLC, based in Lucknow and the atory in Asia (except Japan) deal- conservation of art objects and cently took up a project, aided by ations Development Programme d Unesco, for ascertaining the ring techniques of iron tools and und at various sites in India. gely exploratory in nature, NRLC have made a belated but vital towards solving the problems of India's ancient heritage.

te of the handicaps, the laboratory ead with its pioneering work in the gathering information on wide- chniques which could help in the on of rare art objects. As Agrawal ut: "Very little is known about the adhesive types of papers and col- in the execution of the world dian miniature paintings. But we some research on these."

micro-chemical and spot tests, conducting a study to identify the various Indian miniature collections "schoolwise and datewise" but they are severely hampered by the availability of wide-ranging samples. However, the laboratory has successfully preserved innumerable rare birch bark (*bhoja-patra*) documents dating back to the 13th and 14th centuries, which were sent from various museums to the NRLC for treatment. The biodeterioration section study on the documents revealed that despite ageing, birch bark is considerably resistant to fungal attacks and investigators hope to isolate the active chemical responsible for fungal resistance by this material.

Major Breakthrough: Apart from paintings and miniatures, the NRLC has been conducting tests on metallic and bronze art objects. Currently metallographic studies of iron objects found at Hulaskhera, in Uttar Pradesh are under way at the laboratory. Says Hari Narayan, a scientist engaged in the metallic sampling and analysis techniques: "The growth of 'bronze disease' on copper objects has been, till now, a subject of constant worry for conservationists. Caused by the interaction of chloride salts, the disease can be cured by a common industrial chemical—ion exchange resin." The chemical is commonly used for the softening of hard water and can cut down the rate of precipitation of chlorides. Narayan claims that the method has been a major breakthrough but for one solitary snag: that the chemical does not "prevent surface colour change" in the metallic object.

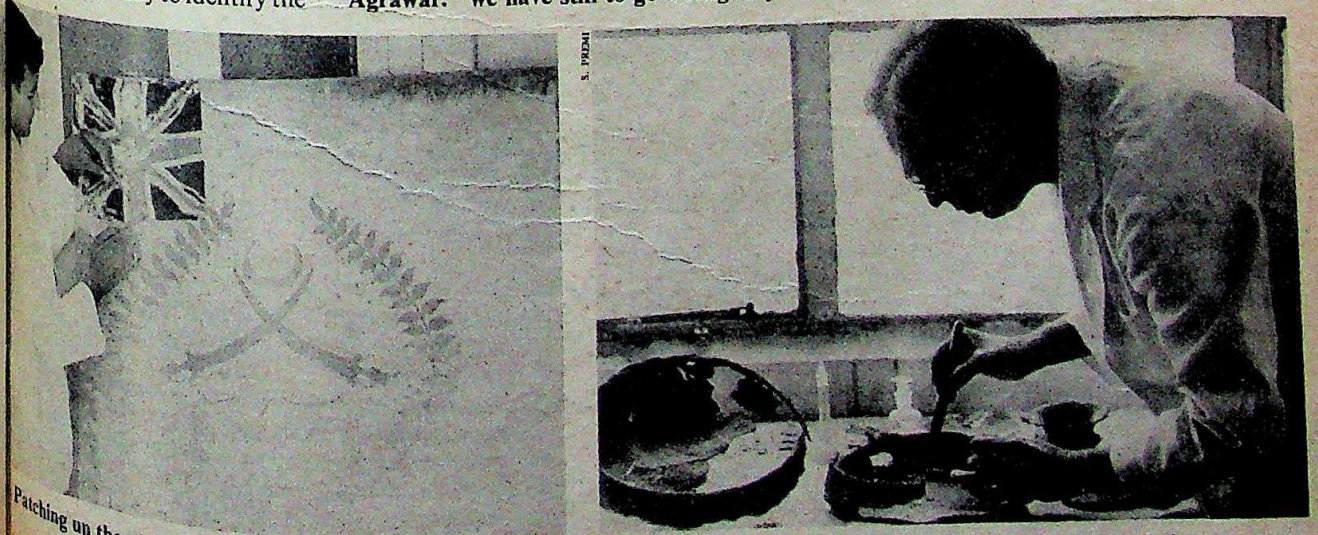
Agrawal: "we have still to go a long way"

Meanwhile, the NRLC, with its painstaking observations and considerable research back-up has set up consultancy services for technical assistance, which have been sent on various foreign assignments to countries like Canada, West Germany, Nigeria, the US and Sri Lanka among others. While the West German museum wanted assistance for the use of treating Indian textiles, the US required treatment techniques for *pichhwais* (Rajasthani wall hangings).

While conservation programmes and research is going on at a rapid pace at the laboratory, they have several plans ahead of them. One of the programmes is the study of copper hoards found in various parts of the country including an analysis of bronze images.

Other major projects undertaken by NRLC are the treatment of the 4th century "diseased" sandstone sculptures of Mathura which have been strengthened by providing a wash of synthetic resins and metal objects received from the ancient Ramayana site in Sringaverapura near Allahabad. Most of the objects worked upon were received in a highly corroded state showing signs of bronze disease. Admits Agrawal, who has trained at the Central Institute of Restoration, Rome: "For the NRLC it's a small beginning, but we have still to go a long way."

—ANAND SAGAR



S. PREMI

Patching up the old regimental colours of a British unit in India (left) and working on a metal relic: pioneering techniques

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SCULPTURE

Mysterious Flight

A COUPLE of birds, worth two-and-a-half million US dollars, have winged their way out of the roost leaving a trail of insoluble mystery. The birds, two seven-foot-high marble replicas of the Rumanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi's *Bird in Space*, executed by the sculptor himself, were in the possession of the Holkars, the ex-rulers of Indore. There are still a couple of replicas in the Holkars' custody, but they say that these are crude imitations made by lesser artists and are, therefore, valueless.

The Union Education Ministry, responsible for enforcing a 1974 legislation curbing the export of antiquities as well as precious objects of art, has taken a more stern view of the disappearance of the two replicas, one in black marble and the other in white. After a futile two-year-long search for the 'original replicas', the ministry recently referred the file to the Union Home Ministry, which in its turn has now assigned the Criminal Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to solve the puzzle. While the search has made little headway, the country's art circuit is agog to find new clues to the saga of Brancusi's birds.

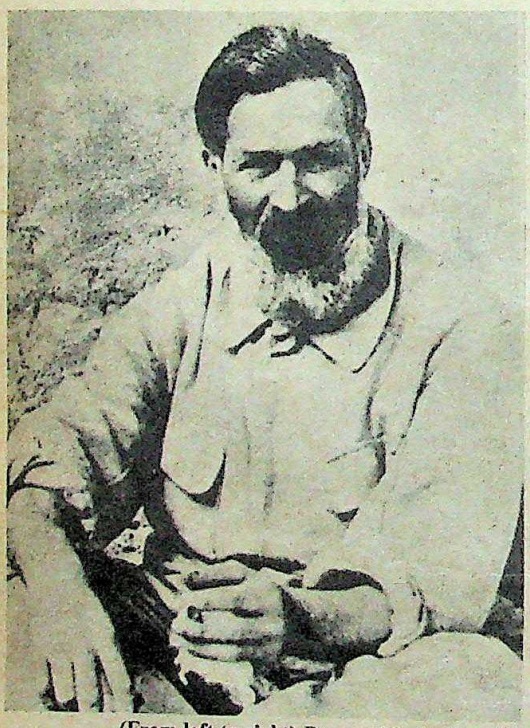
As a sculptor, Brancusi was the first colossus of the post-Rodin era and he in fact stood at the crossroads between the Rodinesque figurative art and the later trends towards abstraction. Born in the Oltenia region of Rumania in 1876, he spent most of his life in France and acquired French nationality in 1952, five years before his death in Paris. As a child, Brancusi worked as a herdsman, shepherding his family flock in the Carpathian mountains. He retained a touch of rustic simplicity till his deathbed, when he was surrounded by simple home-made furniture and a self-designed golf club though he had never played golf in his life.

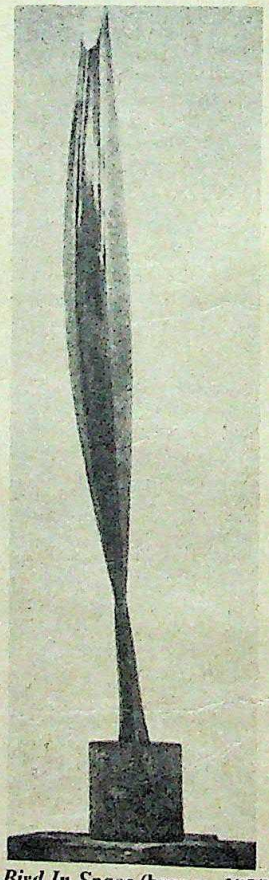
Zenith: Brancusi met the young maharaja of Indore, Holkar Jaswantrao II, when the prince visited Paris from Oxford in the summer of 1933. It was the high noon of his career as he had already finished his pivotal work, *The Beginning of the World*, a pure marble egg shape now kept at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Described by himself as "sculpture for a blind man", 'Beginning' is also the culmination of the celebrated egg theme in his art which, together with the bird theme, form recurrent motifs in the Brancusi gallery. Even today he is referred to as the master of and figurative eggs".

The Brancusi bird, first 1912 with *Maiastra*, flew in from Rumanian folk legends. Do mythical bird, represented rified form, had its head ra was followed by 28 other ver including the celebrated *Bir* first version of which was e ished bronze in 1926. The w an unending upward motion self said: "I wanted to sculpt bird."

Instant Liking: The yo fell in love with the bird at bought it instantly for a nowhere recorded in the However, art prices in Euro soared, and knowledgeable that Jaswantrao might have around US $15,000 for the p Holkar promptly gifted it to ried second wife, an American the sculpture after their divorc little is known about this *Space*; the one that is kept Guggenheim Museum in N may be a later cast of the Brancusi himself and shipped

Jaswantrao was obsessed ing a temple at Indore which collection of art. He discuss with Brancusi for days on end name given by him to





(From left to right) Brancusi in the late '20s; *Bird In Space* (bronze, 1929); Jaswantrao Holkar: puzzle from the past

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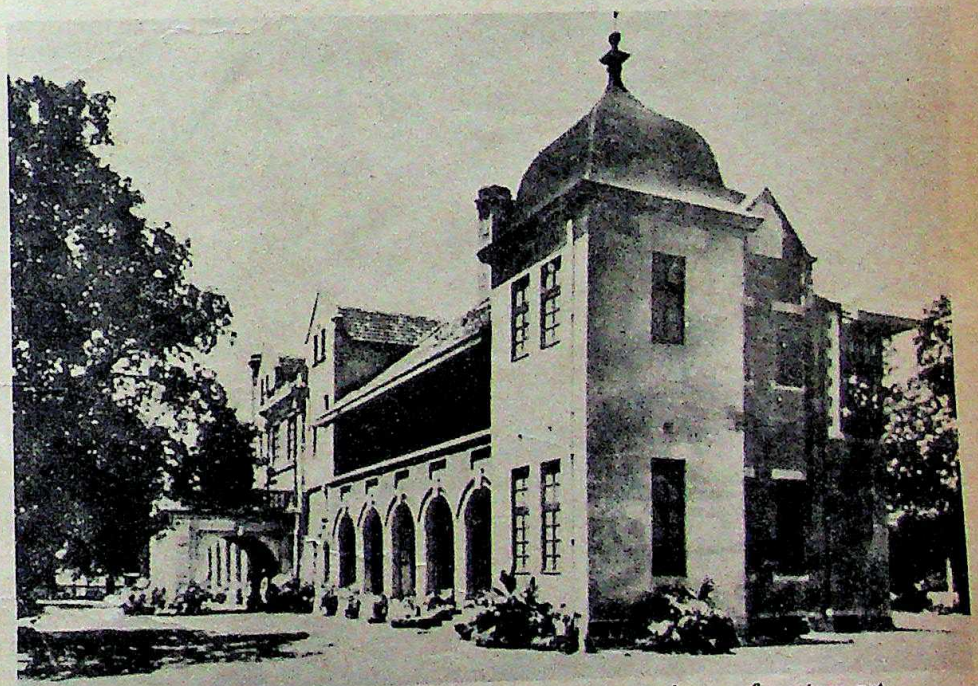
...e "Temple of Contemplation ...erance". They agreed that the ... of the museum should be two ...cas of the *Bird in Space*, one in ...e other in white, and the main ...ould embody the familiar ... geometry of egg shapes. The ...ked Brancusi to make the two ...ts and to bring them to Indore. ...usi visited Indore for a month in ...as put up at the state guest-house, ...a kept exclusively for the use of ...ces, a little distance away from ...sidence at Manikbagh Palace. A ...er of the Holkar state was spe...lled to attend on him; he was ...ar Tiwari, a six-foot Brahmin who ...the state in 1932 as personal ...the German artist employed by ...to restore the art works in his ...Tiwari, now a mellow 73 and still ...ith the Holkars as secretary to the ...(named after Jaswantrao's daug...Malhotra), reminisced to INDIA ...distinctly remember Brancusi ...Indore with his two marble birds. ...such exquisite pieces that once ...them they stay in your memory ...me. One of these, possibly the ...was still incomplete. I saw ...orking in his room to give it the ...uches. Finally it was finished, and ...culptures were presented to the ...

...ARI describes Brancusi as a sp...ly old man, remarkably simple in ...abits, who got fascinated by the ...ees. "He'd eagerly sketch every ...ee that he saw—the leaves, the ...fruit, everything about the banana ...him reach for the sketch-book." ...rdly remembers him having dis...e temple, "nor did the maharaja ...the subject to us". Adds Tiwari: ...came as if to complete his marble ...e solitude of Indore. After finish...k, he left India as suddenly as he ...

...e time of the states's merger on ...1948, however, the Union Govern...ended a list of the Holkars' art ...nder the terms of accession; and, ...ces in the Union Home Ministry, ...usi birds figured in the list as ...ems in the inventory. The Centre ...Holkar to give his collection to the ...seum. Some of his treasures were ...ifted, but a check on the catalogue ...Museum last fortnight showed no ...e birds. Observed an insider of the ...archly: "The Holkars kept every...alue to themselves and passed on to ...e dross."

...after merger, the Centre forced Holkar to form two trusts for managing his vast property—the Usha Trust for his Indian possessions, and the Holkar Trust for his belongings in the United States. The old Holkar died in 1961, and the Usha Trust came under the administration of Usha's husband, Satish Malhotra, a successful Bombay businessman and a relative of the former prime minister to the Holkar state, Colonel Dina Nath.

Soaring Prices: The search for the birds began in 1980, when the Union Education Ministry which had learnt of their existence from the Home Ministry's records of the princely states, wrote to Indore Museum to check if these had been lodged with them. Meanwhile Brancusi prices had been going steadily up. Experts at New Delhi's Lalit Kala Akademi recalled that in the mid-'70s, his marble sculptures made four decades ago, were selling at "a million dollars or more" a piece. Art sellers in Pariswere offering his 1936 work, *The White Seal*, for something close to five million dollars. Naturally, the Brancusi birds believed lying with the Holkars became the talk of India's art circles.



Manikbagh Palace, Indore: home to an eastern connoisseur of western art

As the birds were not to be found at the Indore Museum, the Education Ministry wrote individually to the Lalit Kala Akademi, the National Gallery of Modern Art and the Archaeological Survey of India for their opinions on the subject. Early this year, the file was sent to the Home Ministry and the CBI for a proper investigation.

However, Malhotra, when contacted in Bombay, denied that Brancusi had ever been commissioned by his father-in-law to sculpt anything in India. He said: "What little art there was (with the late Holkar) was given at the time of the merger of the state to the Indore Museum. And the only pieces we have today are a few paintings by Roerich done about 50 years ago." He said that Brancusi had "only envisaged" a futuristically designed temple at Manikbagh Palace, but since the palace was never made the sculptures also "went unmade".

Baffling: Later on, when confronted with the information that the marble birds had been inventoried at the time of merger, Malhotra said that two marble replicas of *Bird in Space* were lying with him, "in my garage", but "they are certainly not Brancusi's; they must have been done by some other person". He added that it was "just as if Husain gives you a grand plan for a temple with 80 horse paintings; you might ask him to show at least what the horse looks like, and so he commissions some junior artist to execute the horse and shows it to you just to give you an idea".

If the marble replicas in Malhotra's possession were done by some nonentities, where then have the replicas made by Brancusi gone? Education Ministry officials agree that the old Holkar was free to have sold, or gifted, abroad the priceless birds in his lifetime, "but not without a clearance from the Government of India as per the terms of accession". Presuming that Holkar did not part with the birds which he loved, they must be lying somewhere, unless a twin bird of an entirely different plumage has been perching in Malhotra's garage.

—SUMIT MITRA with DINESH AWASTHI in Indore and CHANDER UDAY SINGH in Bombay

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HELENE CURTIS

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MALARIA

The Fever Rages

THE GOVERNMENT's health care programmes are known more for their failures than their successes. One of the more resounding flops is the National Malaria Eradication Programme (NMEP) on which more than Rs 250 crore has been spent in the last 20 years. The fever has taken little note of this and last year over 26 lakh cases were reported as against 14 lakh 10 years ago. In 1977, 55 people shivered their way to death; the figure last year was 161. Last fortnight, Health Ministry officials gloomily surveyed the reports sent in from the states in response to a question in the Lok Sabha; one of them admitted: "Malaria accounts for over 40 per cent of the nation's health budget but there is no appreciable decline in its incidence."

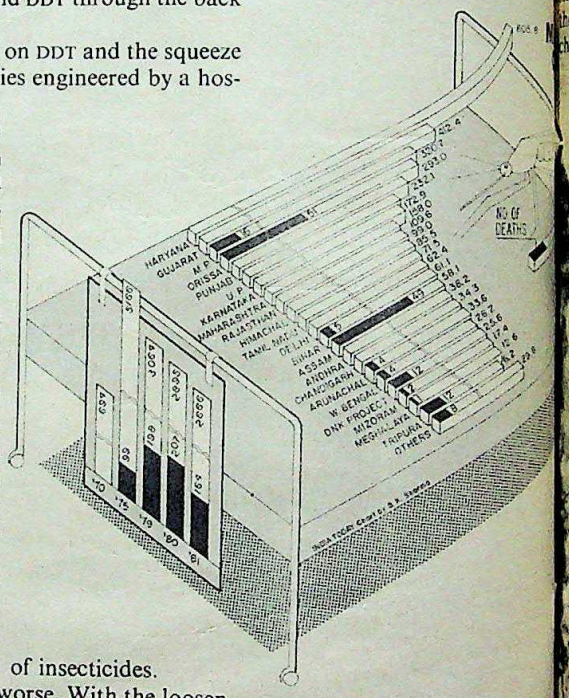
That is an understatement. According to unofficial estimates over 20 lakh cases of the fever were reported from the government-run hospitals and dispensaries in the last six months alone. It is true that the total number of cases has declined to 26 lakh from over 30 lakh in 1979 but it is also true that in 1965 there were only one lakh malaria cases in India. And the declining graph is flattening out: in 1978, malaria cases registered a 26 per cent fall while in 1981 their number fell by just 7.92 per cent over the previous year.

This is a far cry from the heydays of the NMEP when the spray programme initiated in 1953 brought the incidence of malaria from an astronomical 7.5 crore cases in that year to just one lakh 12 years later. The NMEP wiped out the epidemics in states such as Orissa, Assam, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar where the number soared to 15 crore and more. Hygienic conditions, better health care, and the plentiful use of DDT spray brought happier times: no malaria deaths were reported between 1965 and 1973 and only three people died of the fever in 1974.

Vested Interests: When the World Health Organisation discovered that DDT use increased the chlorine content in the human blood, and when it became clear that the mosquitoes had developed resistance to traditional insecticides, the use of DDT in the NMEP was banned. Instead, the Government put its money on Malathion, a powerful insecticide which is non-poisonous and evaporates soon after it is sprayed—it comes mixed in wettable dust powder. The Government issued licences to 10 companies with a total investment of Rs 22 crore for the production of 10,000 tonnes of the new insecticide. This, however, was still below the annual requirement of 18,000 tonnes.

However, it soon became clear that even this inadequate amount was not going to be available. The reason was the vested interests in the form of businessmen who had been making over Rs 40 crore annually by supplying DDT and another pre-Malathion insecticide, to the municipal corporations and the health departments in the various states. The businessmen saw no reason why DDT should not keep its sway in the market and with their hold on the concerned bureaucracy developed over the years managed to stall the distribution of Malathion and continued to vend DDT through the back door this time.

Due to the ban on DDT and the squeeze on Malathion supplies engineered by a hostile bureaucracy, malaria cases more than doubled from 31 lakh in 1974 to 64 lakh in 1976. The Opposition cried foul in state assemblies over NMEP malpractices and the Union Government was grilled for its failure on the crucial front when 99 people fell victim to the scourge in 1975. In 1977, the programme was restructured away from its centralised set-up and state governments were entrusted with purchases of insecticides.



This made things worse. With the loosening of central control the DDT suppliers grew in courage. As Malathion is manufactured only by 10 big firms, which are averse to hanky-panky in supplies and transactions, the DDT suppliers, usually the relatives of politicians, are in clover. In Punjab, for example, the son of a former chief minister has been made a major supplier of DDT to the health department. In Bihar, only 100 tonnes of the state's annual Malathion requirement of 500 tonnes has arrived. State government officials deny that they are buying DDT and not Malathion-mixed wettable dust powder, but they refuse to disclose their suppliers.

Complaints: The Malathion manufacturers cannot but look on in dismay. In a recent memorandum to the Health Ministry they asserted that their units are operating at less than 40 per cent of capa... the lack of demand—they p... 2,600 tonnes in 1981–82 as a... stalled capacity of 10,600 to... Gupta, chairman of Punjab ... cides, a public sector concern... the vested interests, various ... chasing DDT and other non-... cides instead of Malathion. Be... expenses on pesticides and ... much more than would have b... Malathion had been bought." ... of the 10 Malathion produce... verge of closure and only Hindu... des, a Central Government ... Cynamide India Ltd and IFFCO ... manfully.

Ineffective materials a... apart, the NMEP as a whole is ... along. Regular assessment of th... the country's 72 malaria zones ... Blood smears required to be co... 115 towns under the urban ... gramme are taken erratically. ... of 10 villages has the required ... tablets, usually kept by the pan... han or the schoolteacher.

Even in the urban areas ... acute shortage of anti-malaria ... laboratories for the examinat... smears. A Delhi Municipal ... official says: "We get only th... head. We can't even send a lab... street to spray insecticide, let a... medicines and plan in advance ... continues to rage.

—PRA...

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ogical fare

s on the threshold of indi- developing a cheap and effec- bial insecticide that is likely to the country's efforts to reduce ng mosquito population. The rol Research Centre (VCRC) in will soon conduct field trials on hich it had isolated and de- ill mosquito larvae. If the trials ssful then the country may dis- the present costly chemical in- ch as DDT and Malathion which

larva (left) and an infected one

efully inadequate against mos- the former causing serious en- l problems. Predicts P.K. n, VCRC's bespectacled director: is going to be our insecticide of

cillus Thuringiensis (BT), the dea- n from which the Indian scien- veloped an indigenous virulent rain isolated by Israeli scientists in hen standardised by the Pasteur of Paris, the World Health Organisation (WHO) collaborating centre. In an effort to develop an Indian strain VCRC took up research on the bacillus and by January 1980 had successfully isolated it in its laboratory. Tests carried out over a period of two years indicated that the Indian BT was able to kill mosquito larvae within three to 24 hours in breeding areas. The Department of Environment has recently given its clearance to the VORC to carry out extensive field tests on the bacillus. The Centre has requested the Tamil Nadu Government for a site in coastal Rameswaram.

Studies: The Indian strain, called VCRC B-17 was isolated from soil samples collected from paddy fields 10 km from Pondicherry. It was then purified and mass cultured on a simple liquid media consisting of either jaggery molasses, tapioca or groundnut cake. This is significant because these ingredients are easily available from agro-based industries at cheap rates. Tests were then carried out using the biocide either in powder form or from an emulsifiable concentrate. The field studies were done in three habitats: cesspits, cisterns and drains with sewage water, coir pits with high organic pollution and paddy fields with clean water. In all these cases the larvae and pupal density was significantly reduced within 24 hours after the biocide was added.

Like other insecticides, BT has to be consumed by the larvae. It poisons the gut and the stomach of the larvae resulting in its death. But its advantage over Malathion and DDT is that it kills only mosquito larvae while the others effect all useful living organisms present in the vicinity. Tests done with BT on silkworm and honeybee showed that these remained unaffected indicating that the biocide would be a boon to farmers. Apart from being at least 50 per cent cheaper, BT, unlike other insecticides, is not dependent on non-renewable resources like petroleum. Nor does it damage the ecological balance as chemical insecticides do.

When commercially produced, BT is likely to have far reaching impact on mosquito control in the country. Because of the mosquito menace an estimated 236 million people are exposed to malaria and another 18 million to filaria. VCRC has recently achieved another breakthrough in mosquito control research by synthesising a mosquito repellant cream which would be effective for six to eight hours when applied on the skin. Doctors at VCRC claim that commercially produced repellants afford hardly two hours protection. The VCRC repellant is likely to cost four times less and is now waiting for the clearance of the Drugs Controller of India before the Centre hands over the formula for commercial production.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA in Pondicherry

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The baroness: arrested

■ The baroness **Stefania zu Goetzen** has struck again. Barely five months after she created a sensation in New Delhi over the supposed theft of her jewels, the baroness was arrested last fortnight in Geneva on charges of engineering a multi-million dollar jewel heist. The theft, according to information available, took place some months ago at the swank Ritz Hotel in Paris. The hotel refused to comment on the case but police sources in Paris say that extradition proceedings against her have been started with the Swiss Government.

The baroness had last been heard of when she arrived in India last February to attend a wedding, during which she claimed that her diamond earpiece had been stolen from the safe of Oberoi Intercontinental where she was staying. Finally, after a protracted battle with police and customs officials, she left the country last April having left Rs 26 lakh in the form of jewels behind as security, out of personal jewellery worth Rs 1.73 crore. The customs can auction the jewels six months after the date of departure, if the baroness does not pay the duty to claim the jewels. The six months end in August.

But now, with her arrest in Geneva, it seems unlikely that the Baroness will be able to return to recover her jewellery, as she had vowed to do.

■ It was the kind of star wars that represents the gossip columnists's dream. At one end of the ring was Bombay's undisputed tinseltown champion **Amitabh Bachchan** and on the other the south's superstar **Raj Kumar**. Recently the two giants sent laser beams at each other when Bachchan's latest offering *Namak Halal* was given second class treatment after it was scheduled to be premiered at a prominent Bangalore theatre. Kumar's new release *Haalu Jenu* was also to be premiered the same day and the south Indian star demanded showings at the same theatre that was to show

Bachchan and Kumar: burying the hatchet

Namak Halal. Kumar, a bigger crowd-puller in that city than Bachchan, held sway, with the theatreowner obliging by shunting Bachchan's film and replacing it with Kumar's.

But Bachchan's distributors promptly cried "Foul!" and launched a tirade in a prominent trade magazine calling Kumar a "mini-Hitler". But the crowd clearly felt otherwise and an angry mob threatened to boycott all Bachchan starrers in Karnataka. Finally, the referees declared it an honourable draw with Bachchan and Kumar shaking hands in public.

Ironically, days later Bachchan was involved in another fight, this time a mock film sequence, and landed up in hospital with ruptured intestines and a major operation to boot. And all because he forgot to dodge

■ She was transported from the dizzy firmament of Bombay films to a neon-lit stage in one of New Delhi's five-star hotels. Accompanying her were lesser lights of the Hindi movies, who obviously needed an extra boost to their sagging careers. For entertainment-starved Delhiites, it was a treat of the kind they had rarely witnessed. Curvacious starlet **Kalpana Iyer** was in the capital last fortnight, as part of a rare song-and-dance "variety show"—she does these shows regularly in Dubai for an Arab impresario—gyrating to popular film numbers. The *tamasha* put up by a sound systems company seemed clearly to raise flagging spirits as well as part-time pocket money for the entertainers. But even Iyer's slinky sequinned costume, slit at the sides to show off her major assets, failed to evoke the requisite response: the hall was one-fourth empty. Delhi audiences obviously want much more than tantalising glimpses of female flesh.

Iyer: gyrating machine

Mehta: hitting

■ Like vintag
seems to have bee
for Indian au
Salman Rushdie's
for *Midnight's C*
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■ **Died:** Achar
nath Prasad
renowned Hindi l
critic, in Varanas
■ **Died:** Mira R
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this year's Padma
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Gandhi and arrive
the Sabarmati As
She participated i
dom struggle.

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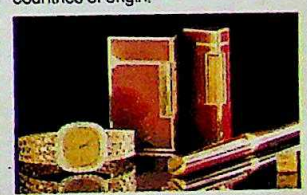

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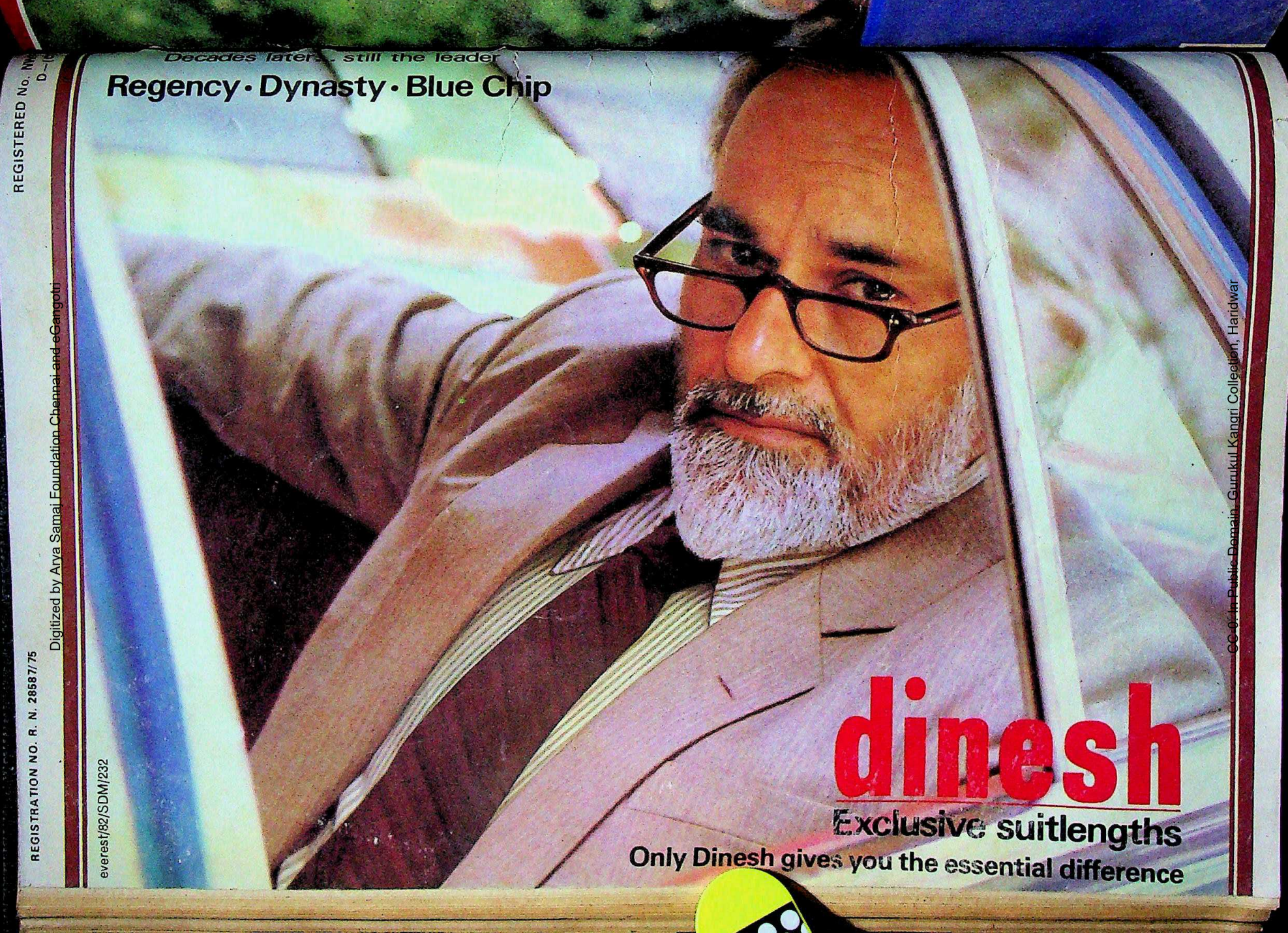

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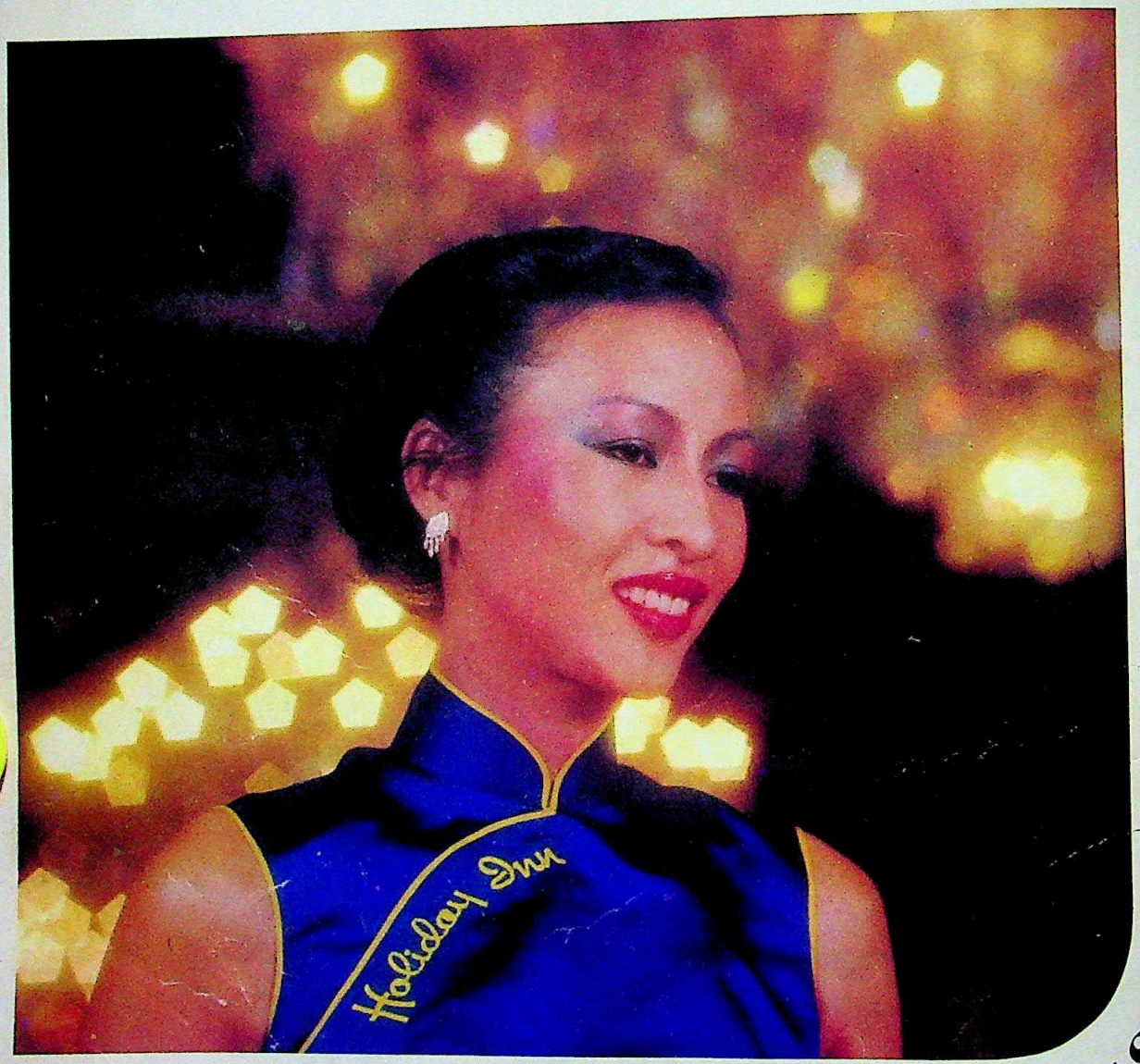

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AUGUST 31, 1982

IF SUMMIT meetings are notorious for the difficulties they erect before newsmen trying to do an honest job of reporting them, the Gandhi-Reagan meeting last fortnight set a new low in the mishandling of media. US-based Indian correspondents, reporting the story of the decade, were thwarted virtually at each step by a Washington embassy which treated them as though they had the plague. Said INDIA TODAY *Correspondent* INDERJIT BADHWAR, *who has reported out of Washington for 14 years, "We were able to cover this visit, not because of any cooperation from the Indian Embassy, but despite the lack of it."*

US-based Indian correspondents were excluded from just about every important function, including the prime minister's dinner. The State Department and the White House gave them several briefings; none were scheduled by the Indian delegation. Unlike Jawaharlal Nehru and Morarji Desai, who would have breakfast or other informal meetings with the Indian press overseas, not a single meeting was scheduled with the Indian press. The Indian reporters were amazed to read the Tarapur story, broken in the US press through a State Department leak, even though the Indian delegation knew about it well in advance.

The information section of the embassy ceased to function about six months ago. It has become a laughing stock, says Badhwar, not just among Indian reporters but also the Americans. The embassy apparently cannot make up its mind who is to handle what: the political section has ultimate authority over press relations but the information section must deal with the media on a day-to-day basis. For Mrs Gandhi's visit the confusion was worse confounded: the embassy had left all decisions to Delhi. The embassy stonewalled requests for a copy of Mrs Gandhi's detailed minute-by-minute programme. "I suppose it contained atomic secrets," quipped Badhwar who obtained a copy through his own US contacts. When an embassy official learnt of this he threw a fit, demanded to know where he had got it from and hinted strongly that it had been stolen. Finally, in sheer disgust, Badhwar telephoned Mrs Gandhi's Information Advisor Sharda Prasad in his hotel room at midnight. Prasad promised things would improve, and they did. Two briefings were held, but they were haphazard; and at least one correspondent who was not told missed one of them. Meanwhile, reports Badhwar, embassy diplomats spent much of their time—one session lasting several hours—trying to determine the pecking order which would decide who would ride in which official limousine.

THIS fortnight's cover story is a cooperative venture. The story was anchored by BADHWAR *in Washington. Correspondents* MADHU TREHAN *and* VIBHUTI PATEL *tracked Mrs Gandhi in New York. To get New Delhi's view, Managing Editor* SUMAN DUBEY *and Senior Editor* S. VENKAT NARAYAN *met a range of top officials who were concerned with the visit or had accompanied Mrs Gandhi. International relations expert* BHABANI SEN GUPTA *analysed the possible implications of the visit.*

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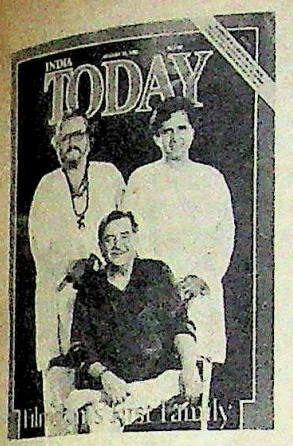

HIND THE SCENES

"Filmdom's First Family" (August 15) a fine word picture of the Kapoors. ke other magazines which write only ip, INDIA TODAY has given the people d the gossip, the lively, fascinating trio have for so many years been syno- ous with the triumph, the tragedy, the tbreak and the comedy of Hindi films.
Delhi — *R. Jaywant*

GNANT PICTURES

The photo-feature "Age And ocence" (August 15) brought tears to my The pictures captured the pathos in the of these two destitute people. ographs like these are rare and should erished for a lifetime.
Vandita Prakash

OWING PAINS

After reading incessant reports about olticians who make a lot of noise, it was sting to read about the industrialists make this country tick ("The Growth ", July 31).
C.P. Belliappa

The one thing that was not mentioned at all these growth kings have grown the aid of foreign collaboration. Every they go abroad seeking foreign know- they make a mockery of Indian claims ng technologically advanced. If the rnment had insisted on the use of ous expertise we could have become e Japan.
Delhi — *Dipankar Basu*

Dhirubhai Ambani is the true success No foreign education, no degrees in gement, no inherited business—just siness acumen and vision.
Umesh K. Neema

hile I do not lag behind in praising the e made by Ambani, I would like to you of the conditions prevailing in the offices of Reliance Textiles. In spite of the blue chip status of the company, the clerical staff is paid a meagre Rs 425 a month. The recruiting policy is laughable.

There are cases of graduates and matriculates in the same grade and paid the same salary. The office staff works in shifts and no provisions are made for their transport though buses and trains are difficult to come by at that hour. Ambani can well afford to improve the working conditions of his employees.
Dombivili — *S. Kannan*

■ Vittal Mallya has never been the chairman of Malayalam Plantations (India) Ltd as written in the article. Nor is this a "Vittal Mallya company". He is a director and has become so at the invitation of the board of directors and by an election by the shareholders.
Thomas P. Chacko
Cochin — Company's Secretary, Malayalam Plantations (India) Ltd

■ There is indeed a good case for reviewing guidelines for the methods of measuring growth. Perhaps assets generated by black money and an assessment of bearer bonds held should be added to the criteria. This would make most of the "kings" into emperors.
New Delhi — *B. Chatterjee*

■ They should have been called rulers, not kings. With their vast reserves it is they who really rule the country not our puppet politicians.
Delhi — *Elty Ngaihte*

PROBLEMS ON FILE

■ The article "Quid Pro Kuo?" (July 31) was excellent. In spite of being principally responsible for a colossal loss to the exchequer, P.C. Sethi still has the temerity to continue in office. But thank God that we still have journalists like Arun Shourie to bring these shameful acts to public notice.
Bombay — *Ramesh Ranganathan*

■ In the famous Mundhra case, T.T. Krishnamachari, who was then the finance minister, resigned. All of us await Sethi's next move.
Madras — *V. Krishnaswami*

■ The article proved how far people in high places are prepared to go to shield their corrupt minions. The file should have been called P420.
Paramakudi — *G. Parthasarathy*

■ Only after going through the pictograph did the whole "Defiling of P20" become clear. The original article in the

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newspaper was too bulky and only confused the reader.

Jaipur *Dr Malika Swaroop*

■ The armchair guide to Mrs Gandhi's tour had many mistakes. The Hotel Carlyle is not spelled Carlisle. Its location on 76th Street and Madison Avenue makes it an uptown, not a downtown hotel. And the reference to a "black-tied luncheon" is incomprehensible. Even at a lunch at the White House the dress is not formal. Finally the name of the organisation is the Asia Society, no Asian.

Calcutta *Bidyut Sarkar*

COURAGEOUS STAND

It is a disgrace that the Israeli consul was asked to leave the country ("Hasty Exit", July 31) because he had the courage to call a spade a spade. While the Arabs are reluctant to condemn the Israeli attack on Beirut, we have rushed on with condemnations. And yet on the subject of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, we are strangely silent.

Kolhapur *Tatya Tendulkar*

CRIMINAL CONNECTIONS

There is some incorrect information in the report on Uttar Pradesh ("A Political Casualty", July 31). It has been mentioned that my nephew was involved in a dacoity case and that I have openly criticised the state Government for fake encounters. It is also said that I led a press party from Kanpur to Lucknow and fed it with propaganda against V.P. Singh.

Let me state that no nephew is involved with dacoits—in fact none of them has even attained majority. I have never criticised the Government openly for fake encounters. I have never led a press party from Kanpur to Lucknow and have only been in Kanpur in transit this year.

Lucknow Shiv Raj Singh,
Former state minister,
General Administration,
Planning and Rural Development

The minister concerned was Sheonath Singh. The error is regretted. —**Editor**

■ It was a shock that over 180 MLA's, including half the ministers, of Uttar Pradesh are involved in criminal cases. What was once said in the Canadian Parliament can be applied here: "...men who were notoriously disloyal and whose characters are really detestable are now degrading the legislature of the country by their presence."

Dehra Dun *D.R. Kothari*

■ The article showed how a well-intentioned person cannot do well in this country. Intelligent and honest politicians will always fall at the hands of their corrupt colleagues.

Lucknow *Pankaj Gupta*

BLIND TERROR

The report "Slashing At Sight" (July 31) was heart-breaking. The day on which the chief minister of Rajasthan came to grant the status of the state's 27th district the town was flooded with light and there was much festivity. But the chief minister did not even bother to visit the poor victims lying in hospital. How can a callous administration like this one ever help the people?

Dholpur *Anoop Badhwa*

■ Why should the police sit back and wait for reports to come out about this prolonged crime? Why were they not out there policing the district?

Mysore *Verghese Alexander*

■ This report will be like water on a duck's back. The Government is sure to turn a Nelson's eye to this entire incident. What happened this year in Dholpur is the continuation of a series that started in November 1978 and yet the Government is nowhere near rounding up the culprits, let alone punishing them.

Jaipur *Urmila Saxena*

■ This incident proves again that India has not emerged from the dark ages. Illiteracy has taken its toll for too long—we must now arm our people with education in earnest. This is the only way that we can prevent barbarous incidents.

Bombay *Sukumar Roy*

■ When the public sees that criminals not only get away with crimes but get honoured in the bargain, this is going to act as an incentive. Jagannath Mishra attends the funeral of Kamdeo Singh, Arjun Singh grants Malkhan Singh special privileges and Haji Mastan meets several politicians socially. Obviously then every criminal feels that he is beyond the purview of the law.

Sombarig *C.M. Jha*

THROWING THE BOOK

Much of the review of my book "Reflections On Our Times" (July 31) is more concerned with my genes and my sins of a commission committed as a former civil servant. The reviewer forgot that he must concentrate on the book itself, howsoever unregenerate the author may be. Your readers would then have known that the book seeks to relate the vast and varied changes which have taken place in the first eight decades of this century to the growth of human consciousness and to the concepts of legitimacy and of moral universe and economic growth being rather than function of technology, ideology or institutions. These are the major themes. There are other themes too. The review omits them all depriving me the opportunity to gratefully acknowledge that his lantern of knowledge and wisdom made my path incandescent. At one point he accuses me of "not identifying the forces within India capitalism" preventing land reforms. He is obviously just counting the words Ladjenisly instead of reading them. If he had read them, he would have shed tears instead of criticising me for my failures. Be that as may, your readers who are neither god nor dull would be interested to know that the authors of *Mandukya Upanishad* had persons like this reviewer in mind when they wrote centuries ago that non-understanding (*apradnya*) is also a kind of understanding (*pradnya*).

New Delhi *P.N. Ha*

ROOT OF THE MATTER

The article "Bound In Black" (Ju... had the wrong focus. Instead of going about the flourishing black market in books, the report should have concentrated on official mismanagement that has led to this situation. Also, no one in Orissa would go shopping in a lungi as shown in the accompanying cartoon.

Delhi *Nabin Chandra Mah...*

BRAVOS FOR BEDI

Bishen Singh Bedi's post-mortem on Indian tour ("England's Revenge", Ju... was bold and frank. He has always been a champion of the players' cause and it's good to see that he is still with them.

Hyderabad *G. Ulaga...*

■ Bedi's analysis exposed the drawbacks. The main one is the part played by the selection board and not more equipped to write about it than *Nippan...*

Jaipur

■ A joke used to circulate in the old that Prasanna thought and then Chandrasekhar would bowl and then and Bedi would bowl and let others do thinking for him.

New Delhi *Vasant G...*

PARTY SHY

In the report "A Diplomat's (June 30) the writer has alleged that I hostess in private and official parties Kuwaiti ambassador in India. I would state that this is untrue. I never acted hostess in any party of the ambassador Kuwait.

New Delhi *Aruna...*

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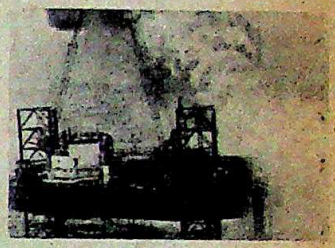
COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY J. WICART/USICA

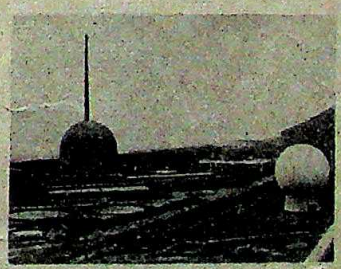
COVER STORY: Mrs Gandhi's trip to the US, which ended last fortnight, was an upbeat affair that lifted the air of despondency and mutual mistrust that have dogged relations between the two countries for over two decades. It was a dazzling performance by the Indian leader and, at the end of it, it signalled the possibility of a new beginning in relations between the world's largest democracies. **Page 66**

CURRENT EVENTS: Last fortnight's blow-out at the ill-fated Sagar Vikas oil rig on the seas off Bombay, was the country's first such major disaster. The burning of the rig has cost India an estimated $85 million in damages and left behind it a trail of destruction. An investigative report on the disastrous blow-out at sea. **Page 16**



GLOBE-TROTTING: It was by far the most sensational heist Europe has seen for a long while. Last fortnight, after hectic and painstaking investigations, the Swiss and French police finally nabbed three culprits involved in the $5 million jewellery theft at the posh Ritz Hotel in Paris, last October. Behind the robbery were two high-profile individuals—Baroness Stefania von Kories zu Goetzen and Baron Hubert Augier de Moussac. A report **Page 50**

SPECIAL REPORT: Since July 24, matinee idol Amitabh Bachchan has been battling for his life following an injury sustained while shooting his latest film. With the country's top specialists fighting to keep him alive, the superstar's medical progress was followed anxiously by millions across the country. **Page 60**



ECONOMY AND INDUSTRY: The deadlock over fuel for Tarapur has been broken, but the atomic energy programme as a whole remains in a shambles: installed nuclear power capacity is less than 11 per cent of the initial target, and such capacity as exists often produces power at barely 25 per cent of its potential. What has gone wrong? And will the record improve? A detailed assessment. **Page 80**

MEDIA: In Bihar, Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra has pushed through an amendment to the Indian Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code Bill which is ostensibly aimed at yellow journalism. The press feels, however, that this is just Mishra's way of ensuring that his government's skeletons will not be exposed. A report on the increasingly acrimonious controversy, and another by celebrated journalist Arun Shourie on his encounter with Mishra. **Page 110**

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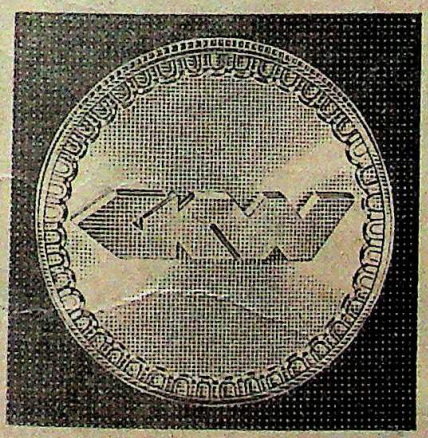

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TESTING THE WATER

THE IRREPRESSIBLE Governor of Punjab Dr Marri Channa Reddy is itching to get back to Andhra politics. Dropped as the state's chief minister in December 1980 following complaints about his arrogance and charges of corruption, he was sent to Punjab four months ago. The controversial Reddy, 64, was on an extensive tour of his home state last fortnight. Many cabinet ministers and more than 10 MLAs flocked to garland him when he arrived at Hyderabad. He addressed several meetings organised by his cronies and told a meeting in the Andhra capital: "If the people want my services, I will come back." The Congress(I) central leadership is worried about the increasing popularity of film star N.T. Rama Rao who formed a regional party, Telugu Desam in March. Some sections of the ruling party feel that B. Venkataram, the gentle and ineffectual chief minister, may not be able to cope with the actor's onslaught. Apparently, Reddy wants Mrs Gandhi to know that he is still popular in the state. In case she wants to drop the present incumbent, who else can she think of but him to take on the popular film star?

A YEN FOR FRIENDSHIP

THE RAZZLE-DAZZLE of Mrs Gandhi's highly successful visit to the US completely overshadowed the final leg—her stopover in Japan—though the latter was also of considerable significance. According to foreign ministry sources, Japan sees India as a vast market for its products and, with its solid industrial base, also feels there are lucrative collaboration possibilities. Accordingly, the Japanese government passed on a request that the prime minister's visit to Japan be extended. What was originally scheduled as little more than a refuelling and rest stop turned into a two day affair that has sown the seeds for much closer ties, economic and political, between the two countries. According to the sources, the Japanese prime minister Zenko Suzuki, will be visiting India later this year to consolidate the gains made at last fortnight's meetings.

A STAR TURN?

DR RAJ KUMAR, the famous Kannada film star in Gundu Rao's cabinet? It may sound incredible but that's precisely what the Congress(I) is trying to achieve. Raj Kumar, who associated with the movement that demands that Kannada be taught compulsorily in all the schools Karnataka has been drawing massive crowds at his meetings and demonstrations. He is proving to be quite a headache for the chief minister. Even though the actor said he has no political ambitions, rumours persist that he will align with S. Bangarappa to form a strong opposition party to fight the ruling party in the forthcoming elections. The Congress(I) is said to be doing its level best to prevent this formidable pair from teaming up together.Its negotiations with Raj Kumar are reported to be at an advanced stage.

RAY'S HOPES

FORMER West Bengal chief minister Siddhartha Shankar Ray is making a determined bid to get back into politics. Ray who did not contest the 1977 Assembly elections has been saying that he is prepared to join the Congress(I) provided certain conditions were met. Ray's application to join the Congress(I) has been pending with Mrs Gandhi for over a year and there are indications that if she keeps him hanging for much longer he will try to form a regional party with disgruntled elements from the two Congress parties and the Janata. He is also said to have been in touch with A.R. Antulay in Maharashtra and Kamlapati Tripathi in Uttar Pradesh.

PROPELLING CHANGES

INDIAN Airlines (IA) plans to phase out its turbo props HS 748s and the eight F–17 because they have beco economical to operate. According to the Ministry Aviation sources the planes will end up with Vayudoot, the airline, now operating with leased aircrafts from IA in the no and parts of north India. Vayudoot, is already in trouble o gas guzzlers and it is bound to end up even deeper in the red, castaways.

THE ROAD TO POWER

INDUSTRY Minister Narayan Dutt Tiwari seems to be favour with members of Parliament in a novel way: Rahul Bajaj, who produces Bajaj scooters, to make a pre allotment of one scooter to each MP. The scooters have a wa running to as long as 12 years, and a new Bajaj scooter com

Tiwari: mobilising a base

resale premium of over Rs 5,000. It is not known how m MP's have kept the scooters for their personal use (a good already own cars) and how many have sold them at the go the market. Is Tiwari trying to build support among party novel fashion? And if he is, what ulterior motives is he may be recalled that A.R. Antulay bought the Maharashtra MLA's, in a remarkably short period of t essentially the same technique.

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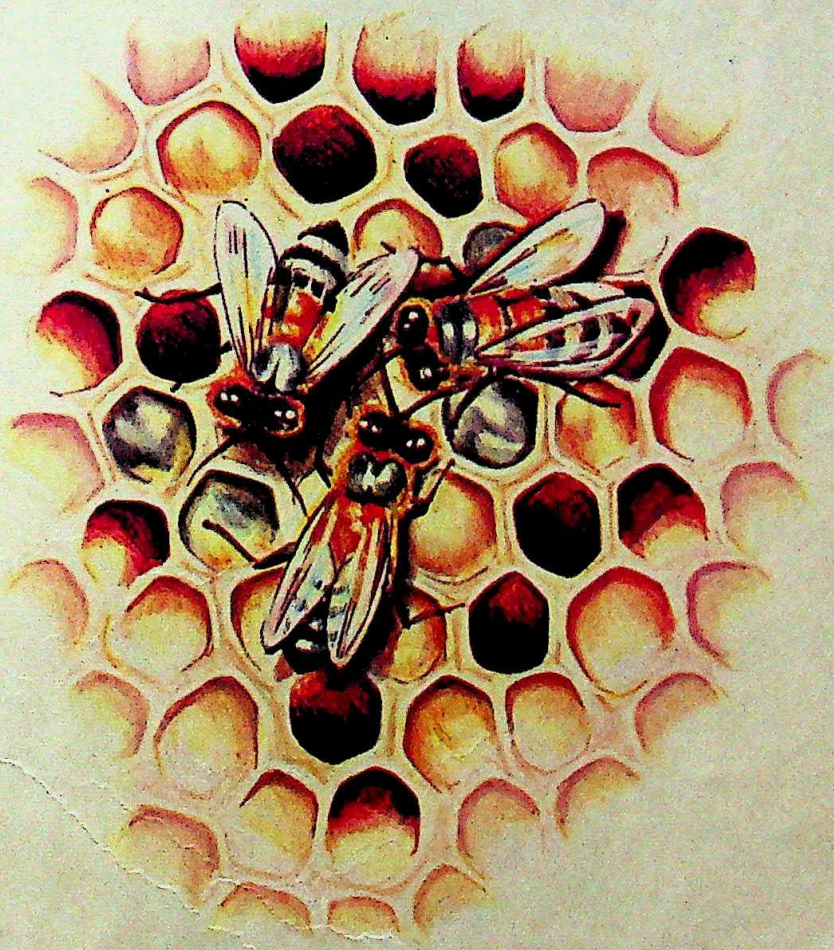

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VOICES

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TODAY, AUGUST

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♦ Throughout the crisis (the '79 dissolution of the Janata government) only Mrs Gandhi played her cards well. She wanted to break the Janata Party and she achieved it. She made a fool of Charan Singh, she made a fool of Morarji Desai.
—*Former President Sanjiva Reddy*

♦ To be in the chair is easier. It is tougher to be without it in politics.
—*Former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, V.P. Singh in* Weekend Review

♦ In my mind he is like Yudhisthir. As wise, as just and as honest. Rajaji (V.P. Singh) resigned because of his conscience. Just like my husband did.
—*Lalita Shastri, widow of the late Lal Bahadur Shastri in* Probe

♦ Mr Charan Singh appears to be a mental case and there is no point in reacting to what he does.
—*Devi Lal after his expulsion from the Lok Dal*

♦ You can see glimpses of foreign money in the offices of certain political parties, in the houses of some political leaders and even in South Block and North Block. The life-style of some leaders speaks volumes for the hospitality they enjoy.
—*Kanwar Lal Gupta,* BJP *leader in* Onlooker

♦ As a superpower, the US receives more than its fair share of brickbats and Indian politicians have not been particularly chary in administering them.
—*S. Nihal Singh in* The Illustrated Weekly of India

♦ We stand upright.
—*Indira Gandhi at a Washington Press Conference.*

♦ Farooq Abdullah is too raw and immature as a political leader (somewhat like Rajiv)...
—*K.A. Abbas in* Blitz

♦ You have become a megalomaniac... you have no sense of gratitude.
—*Madhu Limaye in a letter to Charan Singh*

♦ I confess I have been *The Times'* harlot and know a little more about the facts of life than a sensitive anchorite.
—*P.N. Haksar in response to Sham Lal's review of his book in* The Times of India

♦ Since buttocks (the most sensual part of the female anatomy) are most vital in belly dancing, it can be best performed by a dancer whose buttocks are bare.
—*Khushwant Singh in* The Hindustan Times

♦ I'm just a duty-bound, well-paid clerk. I go to the sets, do what I am told.
—*Amitabh Bachchan in* The Sunday Review

♦ I'm a socially responsible person and I live for a particular art and cause, though I don't believe in dying for it.
—*Veteran film maker V. Shantaram in* Eve's Weekly

♦ Behind that sweet charm lies the most vindictive man one can ever come across!... Basically the man is a coward and does not confront his opponents face to face.
—*Begum Para, yesteryear star on Dilip Kumar in* Stardust

♦ If Meena (Kumari) ji were to write her autobiography today, she would probably reveal her age thus: "I died for forty years."
—*Gulzar in* Movie

♦ There is a 100 per cent difference between Antulay and me.
—*Gundu Rao in the* Express Magazine

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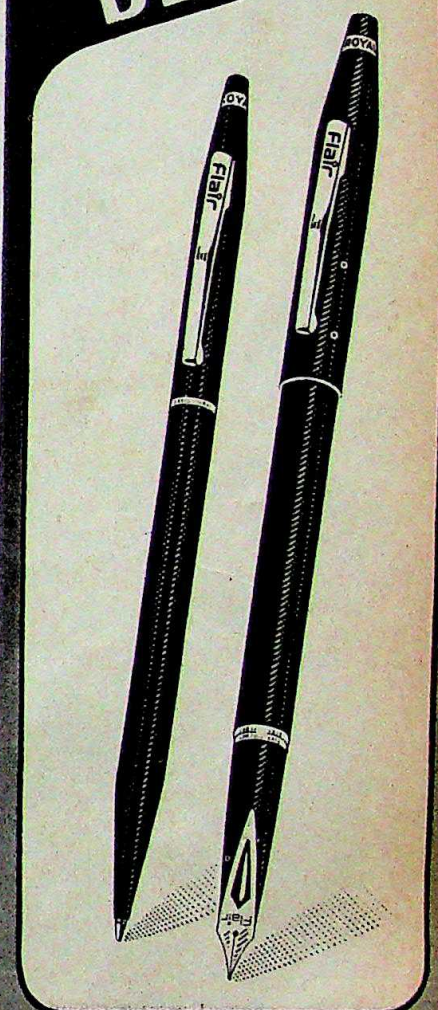

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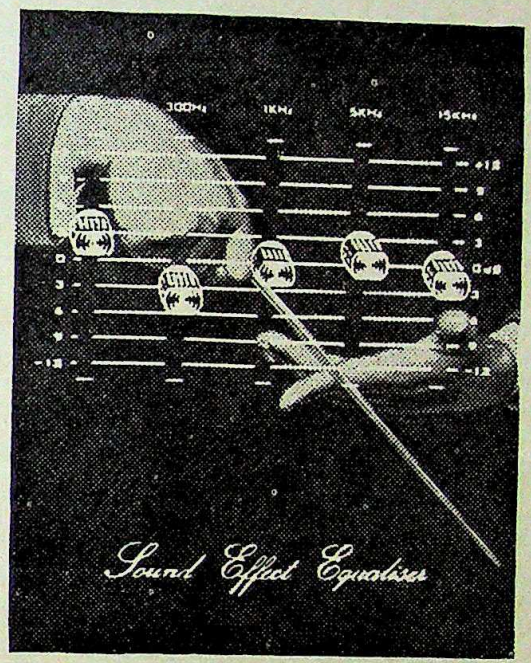

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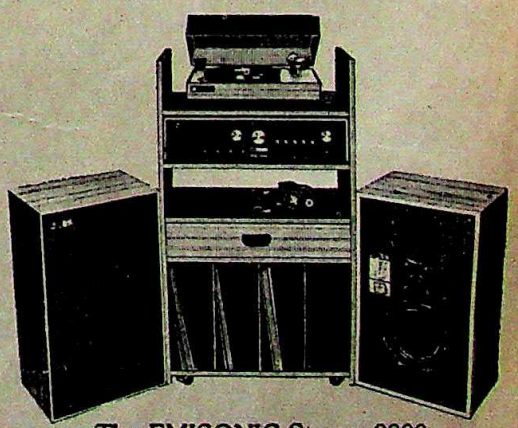

The EMISONIC Stereo 9900 displayed on EMIRACK — THE AUDIORACK.

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FROG FEST

■ The rains are playing hide and seek with unusual vigour this year and to make them show a less mysterious face to a thirsty earth, Indians have been trying everything from prayers to curses. Occasionally, they are driven to something slightly more spectacular, as the villagers in a hamlet near Asansol, West Bengal, did last fortnight.

After the invocations and the curses failed to draw even a drop of rain from an unmerciful sky, they went for the frogs. For days, conches wailed and shehnais piped as a male frog and a female frog, suitably garlanded and crowned with flowers, were led in sumptuous procession to a house and married off. In one typical union, more than 60 villagers followed a palanquin which contained the bridegroom. After the bride had met her groom and blushed, the party returned to the house of the owner of the bridegroom, where it was entertained and feasted.

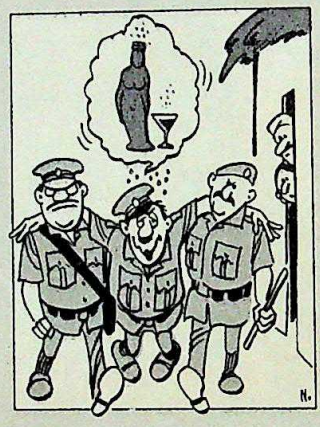
The frogs, of course, carried themselves with aplomb throughout the ceremonies, only croaking with a little more verve than usual. And in a perfectly orchestrated sequel, the rain came down in sheets soon after the last sweet of the feast slid down an appreciative throat and the frogs croaked in joy.

OFFICER ON DUTY

■ Woe to the guardian of the law who strays from the path of discipline and virtue, as a sub-inspector did in Madhya Pradesh. The police officer had come to Rewa clutching a warrant for the arrest of a Rewa householder wanted in Sagar in connection with a theft. The householder wasn't at home, so the officer decided to stay in his house for the night.

He probably wanted to make his short sojourn memorable, and had something on the lines of an orgy on his mind, because the first thing he did after he was made comfortable was to demand wine. He was given wine. He demanded more, got it, gulped it down, and asked for woman. That, however, his hosts either did not know where to get or were not prepared to supply.

The officer was not amused. He went one up on Victoria by pulling out a knife and entertained his hosts with a dance, waving the weapon in the air. By now, the police had been summoned and took their wobbly colleague away, first for a medical examination and, later, back to Sagar. Residents of the locality are waiting eagerly for the moment when the sub-inspector returns. For obvious reasons, he could not serve the warrant the first time.



POLITICAL POWER

■ If any proof was needed that Indian politicians command a lot of influence, it is available in the story of a Karnataka legislator and his letters. The Rural High School at Bethamangala near Kolar was in the usual mess that most rural high schools are in. So the representative of that constituency wrote to the chief minister and the state education minister, asking that the school be taken over by the Government.

The concerned authorities, when they came to know of the letters, grew even more concerned. "Yes, sir," they said humbly—and promptly and grandly sanctioned a new high school for the home village of the legislator, Bhuvanahalli. As the village is just a tiny collection of houses, cows and lazy goats and is in no position to supply students for a full-fledged high school, the concerned authorities were obviously carrying their zeal to ridiculous heights.

And so an embarrassed and more than slightly annoyed legislator wrote another letter asking that the high school site be shifted to another, more popular place. It is quite possible, however, that he might be presented with a university.

BOTTOMS UP!

■ They add spice to society, those brave men who prop up lampposts in the night, yodel Christmas carols when happy times come calling, conceal piles of empty bottles in cupboards, and provide film actors with ideas for some of their best (hic!), striking (squint!) and memorable (trip!) roles. They are the drunkards.

No longer will these spirited men and women be disunited, left to the vagaries of a censorious world. In Kerala, the Kerala Drunkards Association was formed a few weeks ago and is calling all sozzled brethren to its banner. In a memorandum to the state excise minister, the association demanded fixed prices for various brands of Indian-made foreign liquor, price labels on the bottles, and a uniform price for toddy.

M.A. Sadanandan, president of the association, declared that it was meant mainly to protect the interests of the "poor" drunkards. Cheers! Or, rather, bottoms up! Let me bring on one for the road.

—Compiled by JAGANNATH DUBE

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Some weekends never come to an end.

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HELENE CURTIS

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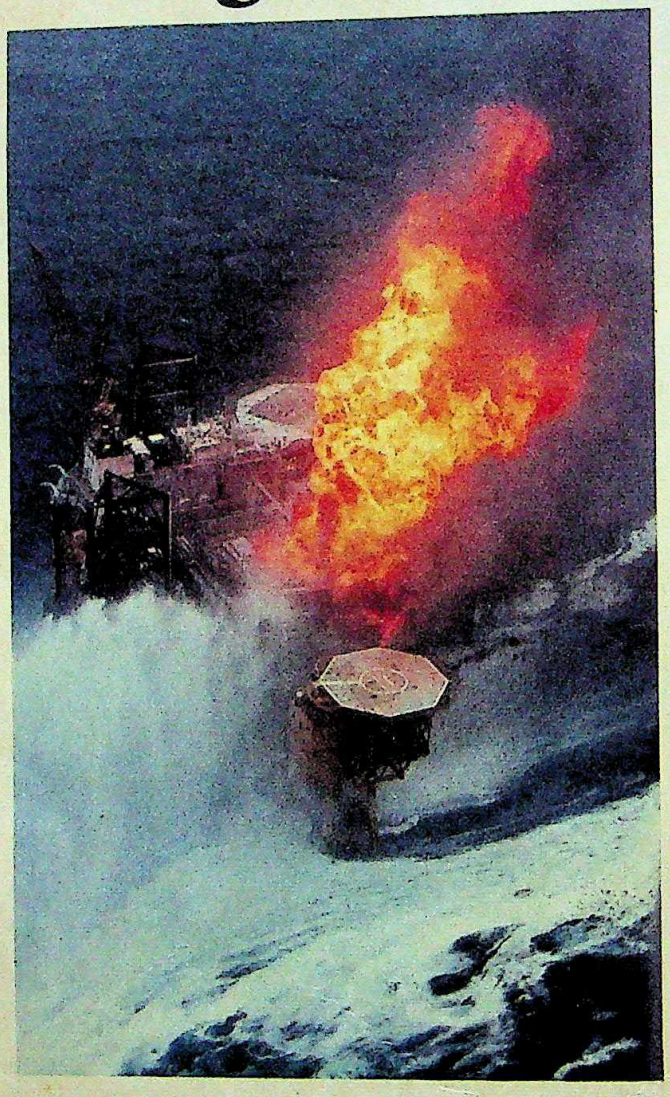
BOMBAY HIGH

The Towering Inferno

IT WAS an evening of high anxiety at the control room of Sagar Vikas, the blue-and-yellow jack-up drilling rig of the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) straddling the choppy sea off Bombay like some huge insect made of tubular steel. For 72 hours, the men on board the rig had been monitoring on their gauges strange drops in resistance to the drill bit boring a six-inch hole below platform SJ (S for the southern section of Bombay High; J for the alphabetical order of the platform), 1.68 km under the bottom of the shallow continental shelf.

Oilmen call the phenomenon a 'kick', and wince at its thought. For it augurs a freak encounter with a layer of high-pressure high-density gas or oil, threatening to tear its way up through the well in uncontrollable fury. Its consequent hazard, the blow-out, is the worst thing that can happen in the oil industry.

The 74 occupants of the Sagar Vikas, who had become aware of the 'kick' on July 27, were grimly conscious of the risks involved when the rig's managers decided on July 30 to lift the two-tonne valve, or the blow-out preventor (BOP) atop the drill pipe in a high-risk gamble to cap the well. But oil-drilling itself is a high-risk industry, a Russian roulette of high technology. For the Sagar Vikas, the firing pin hit the loaded chamber this time. At 9.30 p.m., within minutes of what an ONGC source described as "fiddling with the BOP", the 147-foot derrick of the rig was shuddering with violent convulsions. Simultaneously the gauges went completely haywire and a deafening noise rent the stillness of the night. In a mad rush, gas, oil and water surged out of the drill pipe, and the commander of the rig, Manmohan Singh yelled into the wireless: "Help, it's a bl... out!"



Flames from platform SJ shoot 80 metres into the sky (top) and (above) the fire-fighting ships Pacific Constructor and Gulfleet-46 aim their water hoses at the burning rig

Rescue Operation: ... sheer providence, the ... rescue ships were close ... berthed to the platform nex... the ill-fated SJ. Within ten m... utes, 72 of the 74 men on bo... were herded out on the p... form. However, the two cr... operators clambered up to ... puggy-net—the cabin—of ... crane, and drove the arms of ... 105-foot giant to lift up ... batches their stranded col... gues and then to land ... human cargo on to the res... ships. Their job done, the ... remaining men switched off ... generators except the em... gency generator at the top, ... moved into a rubber din... which they rowed to the res... ship.

The rescue operation ... over in just 10 minutes. ... ONGC, which had a blow... free record since the begin... of its offshore operations ... 1976, was too embarrassed ... even announce the mishap ... the world for another 24 ho... But the fury of nature ev... tually blazed its signa... against the sky. On Augu... the dark emission from the ... caught fire, apparently spar... off by the collision of ... pieces furlongs below the ... bed. Describing the scene ... ONGC official said: "It wa... sight to remember. It was ... lish, yet a dazzling spectac...

The fire raged for ... three days, engulfing the ... rick, the crane, parts of ... platform and the flower-s... gleaming yellow helipad. ... flames shot up to a height ... metres, its tongues occasio... striking cobra-like at the ... fighting ships, Pacific ... tructor and Gulfleet-46, ... chored only 20 feet away ... water hoses of the two ... tered boats spewed ... gallons of water each sec... control the flames. Yet it ... in defiance of man's ...

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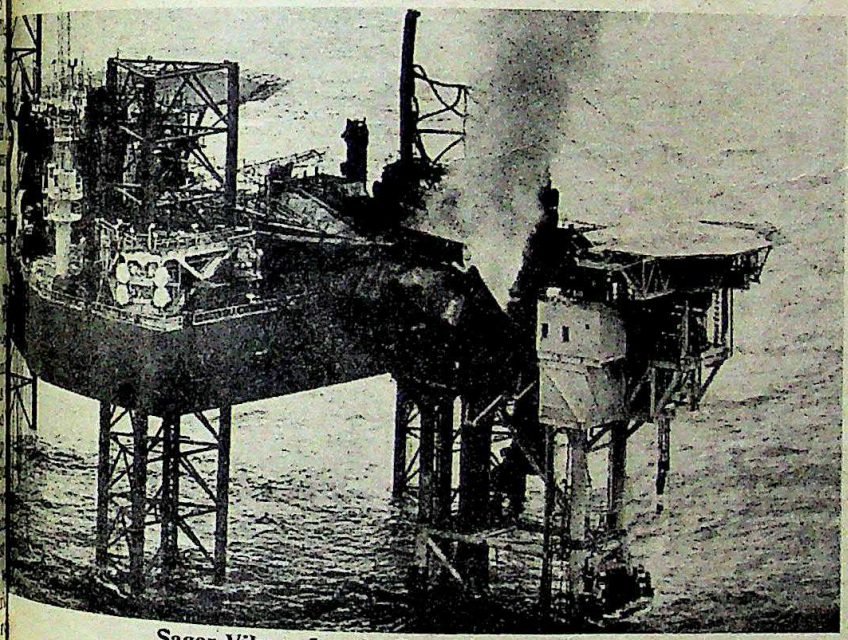
...as suddenly as it had started, the fire ...d away, leaving a trail of mystery and ...eration. The well still belches out gas and ...articles.

Expanding Assets: The US $40 million ...custom-built at the yard of Hitachi ...en, the Japanese ship-building giant, ...ed the ONGC fleet in 1981. Together with ...wo other jack-up rigs, Sagar Samrat and ...r Pragati, the newly acquired West ...-built drill ship, Sagar Prabhat, and ...charter-hired rigs, the ONGC now rules ...country's hydrocarbon-rich continental ...f, lancing the sea bed with over 200 wells ...have thrust 111 kilometres of drill-pipes ...underwater rocks. Three other drilling ...and another drill ship are joining the ...c fleet this year, when offshore ...bilities are geared to chalk up a 50 per ...e from its present 8 million tonnes of ...a year.

to let any photograph sneak out from SJ, standing in open sea 145 km off Bombay's Juhu beach. The 74 survivors—barring its top six men—were promptly whisked away from the scene, with cash grants stuffed in their pockets, and were told to seal their lips to newsmen's queries.

Write-off: However, even on the first day of the fire, reports began trickling into Bombay that the rig, as well as the US $30 million platform supporting four other wells (SJ 1–4) were well-nigh lost. By the second day, the derrick, with its steel frame mangled at a temperature ranging close to 800 degrees centigrade, began to hang down at a precarious angle. The flames had also consumed portions of the helipad. One of the platform's legs got twisted out of shape and the whole frame stooped towards the sea as though in a stiff bow. Admitted Wahi at one of his tension charged press conferences in ONGC's 12th-floor office at Express Tower: "We are writing the rig off." With a touch of gallows humour, he was parading men from his insurance wing at the press conference.



CHANDU MHATRE

Sagar Vikas after the fire: a burnt-out case

But even writing-off was an expensive business. The rogue rig, from which the flaming liquid and gas cascaded out, stood like a giant time bomb. It could easily release an oil slick which could burn as it floated down to the other four wells, setting off further fires, apart from causing an untold pollution hazard.

Specialist Help: At this stage, the Government summoned the help of "Red" Adair, the 63-year-old Houston-based head of a firm that specialises in well killing. Adair, who is the world's highest paid disaster fighter, literally shot into fame in 1939 when he was lifted 50 feet into the air by a blow-out and landed unharmed on his feet. Since then he has created many survival sagas, falling into a well of boiling water, breaking virtually every piece of bone in his body, being temporarily blinded and told that he'd never walk again. His biggest job was in 1961 when an Algerian gas well sent flames so high that astronaut John Glenn could see them as he orbited in his Mercury space capsule. Adair and his men drilled a mile-and-a-half into the Sahara to pour in cooling water and then blasted the fire out with one explosive charge.

On the night of August 3, Adair's ace fire-fighter, Raymond Henry, a bearded and burly Texan, accompanied by an assistant, flew into Bombay, and immediately on arrival, set out in a helicopter for Pacific Constructor, the fire-fighting vessel whose deck had become the observation post for watching the inferno.

Henry moved as close as 20 feet from the fire on board the lighter and smaller vessel, Gulfleet-46, and surveyed the rig in heat that nearly singed his beard. He redirected the hoses so that they spouted sea water at crucial fire zones, and repeated the operation till the flame stood vertically instead of swaying dangerously in all directions. Back in Bombay, on Henry's advice, Wahi and his men were sending frantic telexes in an effort to gather more fire-fighting vessels.

GULFLEET-47, then anchored at Madras, was summoned to Bombay High at once; the semi-submersible rig, Dixilyn Feel 95, was called from Oman to meet the contingency of having to drill a relief well nearby for letting out the gas in the squeezed-up formation which SJ-5 had accidentally touched; Felix Service II, another vessel fitted out with high-power pumps, was fetched from Bahrain; Hercules, a barge berthed at Bombay, was hurriedly equipped with similar pumps flown in from the US.

Sitting in Houston, Adair kept himself to his office, clearing over long-distance phone each equipment for requisition, suggesting sources, and himself getting ready to fly down to Bombay. Suddenly, on the afternoon of August 5, the fire put itself out, probably, explained Henry, as a result of shale and rock particles forming a temporary "bridge" between the burning zone of the column and the non-burning zone.

Though the fire had gone out, there was no sign of the blow-out abating. When newsmen were flown close to SJ-5 the next day in an MI-8 helicopter they saw a swirling fountain of sooty haze, the colour of which

...e catastrophe at Sagar Vikas hit the ...in mid-spring. The rig was clearly the ...donna of its fleet, having recently set up ...rd by drilling four wells at Bombay ...southern platform M (known as SM) ...63 days, or an average of only 15.56 ...each well. Ironically, it won the best ...award as well as the best overall ...mance award of the ONGC for the year ...87. Said S.P. Wahi, the sprightly ex- ...ef and chairman of ONGC: "Sagar ...is the most beautiful of our rigs. Her ...nt condition is an unbearable sight for ...of our men."

...t how unbearable the sight was could ...e gauged by the ONGC men themselves ...e throughout the period during which ...e raged, the commission took care not

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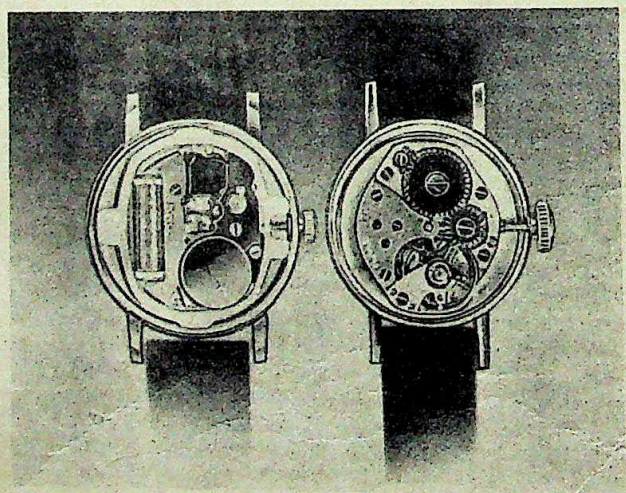

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anged every minute from dark to ashen y to pale yellow. "A matchstick can nite the blow-out," reminded an mpanying ONGC official with grim acity.

Welcome Respite: The ONGC got a ch-needed respite as atmospheric tests ved that the well was emitting only gas d no oil, thus posing no further threat of oil slick. Meanwhile, the requisitioned ls arrived one after another and stood t case a fresh fire broke out. Till then, the t narrowed down to somehow capping l well by clamping an unpushable lid, ghing nearly four tonnes and screwed ly to the sea bed. After that, all that the men could do was to wait for more logical data on the particular oil horizon, if this turned out to be hazardous, to e off the well.

But it is not possible to cap a well that lowing out in full fury. r that, the well needs to be l', either by drilling a relief or by creating with an losive charge, a subsidence the surrounding rocks, or its ing in'. There is still danger fresh emission of oil with blow-out; Henry firmly said If such a thing happened blow-out needed to be reig- to eliminate the danger of l slick. Last fortnight, the ndoned rig, once the pride ONGC, still shook groggily the unstable platform. The rocarbon formation, squ- to anything between 150 and 300 times al atmospheric pressure, heaved from bowels of the earth like a subterranean ster.

Though the Bombay High blow-out, ding the clean-up expenses and the ge and pollution liability, is covered by d India Insurance (and reinsured in don), the accident will still leave its rrassing footmarks on the ONGC's rwise enviable record. Besides the loss g-time it is, as the insurance industry es privately admit, bound to raise ia on new liabilities. And, as an expert ked to Sagar Samrat remarked: "An n who has witnessed a blow-out will be the same again."

Human Error: Out of the 140-odd rig sas in the world oil industry between and 1980, blow-outs accounted for 35, arly 25 per cent. "It's happening every ," said Henry, adding with pride that 's men have controlled a blow-out in Gulf of Mexico where 23 wells were afire me. But the blow-out is almost always esult of human error. Writing in the 1981 issue of *Offshore*, the main international journal of the industry, commentator Leo LeBlanc observed that the high incidence of blow-outs in recent times "indicated that despite technological developments and precautions, the tendency to drill deeper and faster is keeping the accident share up".

In the case of Sagar Vikas, it is difficult to restructure the exact sequence of events because the officials have all clammed up for the fear of fouling up the insurance procedures. But the crucial decision to lift the top ram of the BOP minutes before the blow-out is most likely to be questioned at the time of claiming compensation for loss and damages.

An unofficial 'suggestion' from the ONGC high-ups that the BOP had perhaps not been touched at all after being pushed down and that it might have leaked would be difficult to establish. The BOP at the well, made by Camerons of the US, was tested only two weeks back for pressure up to 5,000 lbs per square inch. When asked what he thought was the real reason for the blow-out, Wahi replied bluntly: "I'd not speculate before an enquiry is held and insurance matters sorted out."

CHANDU MHATRE

Wahi (left) and Henry: playing with fire

Close Secret: By sheer coincidence, however, the reinsurance cover was renegotiated in London on July 30 afternoon, probably without knowledge that a blow-out was on. In fact the policy was rewritten from August 1 for a period of 18 months with substantial reduction in premium. Still, no official of ONGC could say if the cost of engaging Adair's team would be met by the insurance companies. The cost is a closely guarded secret. But, in combating a blow-out at the Ekofisk field in North Sea in April 1977, Adair charged nearly £4 million for eight days' work; the blow-out was not accompanied by fire. Oil experts say that Adair's charges are up 100 per cent since then, and he charges more for fire-accompanied blow-outs. When asked what the precise bill is, Henry cupped his ears and told INDIA TODAY: "Can't hear the question."

Nevertheless, the oil business is a game of high risks and unknown danger. A.K. Malhotra, the commission's top-drawer oilman and its member (offshore), admitted that seismographic surveys, however sophisticated, "show very little precise details about the contour of the rocks way below the bottom of the sea". Malhotra gazed out of his room to the distant Malabar Hill and said: "From here, you can map the hill out there. But how do you know where the roads criss-cross unless you get there?

It was an unmitigated run of luck that the ONGC never experienced a blow-out since 1965, when their well at Assam's Rudrasagar field belched gas. But for many at the ONGC, the Bombay High mishap was an awakening to reality. Ruefully admitted a survivor of Sagar Vikas: "It was a coming of age."

Preventible Error: Oil experts agree that blow-outs are preventible as long as safety measures are taken at every stage. But often they are not taken, caused primarily by the compulsion to "drill deeper and faster", and also by the psychological state of men on the rig, who are frequently driven to a mental precipice by isolation and rigid rules. Alcohol, for instance, is not allowed on board a rig; smoking is permitted only inside a small room. In a 14-day shift, the constant drone of machinery can drive the uninitiated to deafness.

Within such surroundings, an amazing array of technical tasks are performed. The most important of them is the drilling itself, which involves injecting a continuous flow of chemical 'mud' into the space between the well's wall and the drill pipe, controlling the rotary table that grinds the drill-bit against the rock below, and recovering the mud that travels back through the pipe for chemical examination of its gas and oil contents. All these are done on board by highly trained technicians.

In the middle of a frenetic production drive, it is unlikely that the ONGC will pause to take a look backwards. Between May 1981 and May 1982, it raised crude production by 46 per cent and the production of natural gas by 26 per cent. Wahi, even in the midst of the post blow-out gloom, oozed confidence when he said there would not be any let-up in the exploration and production plans, and that in spite of the blow-out the "morale of our men is high". But, even as his legion of ocean-drillers go on digging the sea bed like moles burrowing the field, the danger is that yet another loaded chamber will go off in the dangerous oil roulette.

—SUMIT MITRA in Bombay

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THE OPPOSITION

Castles Of Sand

LAST fortnight, a jovial crowd of Lok Dal leaders and workers milled out of New Delhi's Vishwa Yuvak Kendra hall, looking quite satisfied with their 'achievement'. At a meeting marked by bouts of fiery oratory, the leaders, representing the breakaway Lok Dal faction, had nominated former Bihar chief minister Karpoori Thakur as their president and were on their way to float yet another party, the fourth to be born out of the ruins of the house that septugenarian Chaudhuri Charan Singh built three years ago.

Thakur's rebellion could have a higher aggressive content had the Chaudhuri not smothered it earlier by giving marching orders from the party to nearly all his adversaries, including 10 of the 46 national executive members. Therefore, the rebels met merely as 'ex-members' and could lay no claim to either the name or the symbol of the party, which remain with Charan Singh.

(From left sitting) Patnaik, Limaye, Devi Lal, Fernandes, Thakur and Ray at the Lok Dal (K) meeting: generals without an army

Heavy Toll: However, the rebellion took a heavy toll of party MLA's. Rabi Ray, yet another rebel leader, claimed having enlisted 38 of 42 Bihar MLA's, 15 of the 26 Haryana MLA's, six of the seven from Rajasthan, all the 12 from Orissa and all the six from Andhra Pradesh. Rounding it off, Ray counted 80 of the 148 Lok Dal MLA's among those who had deserted Charan Singh. The meeting, however, was not attended by more than 20 MLA's and, therefore, there was nothing beyond Ray's word to prove the claim.

What even the Thakur faction did not disclaim was the fact that the Chaudhuri had managed to retain his hold over the party in his home state, Uttar Pradesh. Only two of the 52 Uttar Pradesh MLA's attended the meeting whereas the Lok Sabha members, the bulk of whom came from this state, also stuck with Singh. Thakur claimed that eight of the party's 32 Lok Sabha members had torn away from the party but the roll call did not exceed six. However, most of the Lok Dal leaders with star-ratings had joined Thakur, including George Fernandes, Mahdu Limaye, Biju Patnaik, Purushottam Kaushik and Devi Lal.

At the end of the convulsive parting of ways, it was clearly Charan Singh who had received fewer battle-scars as he retained control in the only region where the Lok Dal had some relevance—Uttar Pradesh. And, with the exception of Biju Patnaik and Devi Lal, almost the entire group of rebels represented the eternal nomads of Indian politics—the Socialists. Volatile and fiercely individualistic, the record of these men's switching parties is a legend.

In 15 years since the Socialists formed state governments in northern India in alliance with various other opposition groups, their record of party-hopping has been unique. Madhu Limaye, for instance, changed over five times; Raj Narain, who is now in H.N. Bahuguna's Democratic Socialist Party (DSP), switched seven times; Chandrajit Yadav, who now presides over Janavadi Dal, changed four times; Fernandes changed over five times; Ray wove in and out of five parties; and so did Thakur himself.

Unseemly Cracks: Pitted against such virtuoso performers of the Socialist ilk, the Communists could only come out the second best. But even the Left camp, generally known for its adhesive property, was showing unseemly cracks, largely a result of the tussle over portfolio allocation back in fiefdom, West Bengal (see Current E page 25). A fortnight ago, the disunity Opposition camp spilt out into the when a large number of them voted their parties' mandates at the Presi election. In the bargain, the Akali Dal faction of which had voted for Zail formally split.

The Communist Party of India which considers the Bharatiya Janata (BJP) to be its arch enemy, still mana vote with it for the Opposition can H.R. Khanna. But the CPI Sec General, Rajeswara Rao, had to face questions at his party's national when 20 of its 146 members put forw amendment questioning the wisdom decision. Rao emphasised that no MLA belonging to his party voted against th of the leadership at the Presidential el

Even within the ranks of the closely-knit Communist Party of Marxist (CPI-M), subterranean tensio building up on a wide range of issues: the party forsake its allies like the Fo Bloc and the Revolutionary Socialist (RSP) in West Bengal in exchange of ties with the CPI? Should it shun any with a grouping that has the BJP in it forthcoming elections in four states Union Territory of Delhi? Should it to call Mrs Gandhi's forthcoming vis Soviet Union a positive step, or cut ide cal corners to find suspicious designs too?

The problem before the other sition party, the Congress(S), was to ranks together after three waves of ex a year—those led by Y.B. Chavan Antony and the late Devraj Urs. moment, the Congress(S) is pulled directions as the West Bengal group, the party chief Priya Ranjan Das Mu veering towards the Congress(I) as it common cause with it against the rul Front, while the Maharashtra group Sharad Pawar, which is the only re able group anyway tries to stay as f the Congress(I) as possible.

However, the split in the Le turned out to be the biggest blow Opposition in terms of its credibil stamina to fight. As Kumbharam Ar of the pillars of the rebel group, explained: "Chaudhuri Charan Sing manage to keep up a facade of nationa because so many important leader other states were with him. After them, his party will shrink even in imagination and he can at best linger district level leader." Arya, whose Rajasthan unit by and large follow into the new party, was merely ech general belief in the rebel camp that

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erge stronger from the split. Couching it
mild harsher language, Ray said "the
ener the Chaudhuri retired from politics
better for the country."

Ironically, Charan Singh too betrayed
lar feelings towards the rebels. He pro-
ly appointed Ram Naresh Yadav, the
mer Uttar Pradesh chief minister, as the
Lok Dal secretary. Yadav, who repre-
the backward caste groupings, was
ed up mainly to fill the void created by
exit of Thakur, also a backward caste
der. Settling down in his new seat, Yadav,
ough a mild-mannered man, fulminated
inst the "Fernandes-Limaye-Ray-
aik clique" which he compared to a
ngrene". He said the party had been able
hold on to its own in Uttar Pradesh which
described as the Lok Dal's "cradle as well
springboard."

Thakur himself also had plenty to say
out the split though he treads more cau-
sly than his uninhibited colleagues.
raying a rare reticence, he refrained from
ing abuses with the official leadership of
Lok Dal. Instead, he merely said that the
y, under the Chaudhuri's leadership,
been "lacking in cohesion" and that the
"is a victory of principles as opposed to
ult of personality"

Poised Upwards: In the midst of split and discord, the only individual leader who is in a position to inch upwards is Bahuguna. When he left the Congress(I) two years ago, he made a small but painful dent in the Congress(I) edifice by carrying away eight of its Lok Sabha members. Since then, the number of Lok Sabha members in his DSP has grown, and not declined, which is a feat by itself. Last fortnight, Opposition leaders reached a consensus on Bahuguna leading the no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha. Thus, with his 13 MP's, Bahuguna acquired an aura which even the Marxists, with their 36 MP's, were way behind achieving. He was forging useful friendship with elements as disparate as the Communists on one hand and dissidents in the Congress(I) on the other. During the last fortnight, for example, Bahuguna's emissaries individually contacted a large number of the supporters of A.R. Antulay in Maharashtra. At the same time he sounded out S. Bangarappa the former Karnataka Congress(I) chief on a possible joining of hands.

With the exception of Bahuguna, and a stable BJP, the Opposition scenario could gladden the heart of only one person: Mrs Gandhi. As elections in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tripura and Jammu and Kashmir, besides the Union Territory of Delhi, drew near, the adversaries of the Congress(I) seemed to be overcome by a lemming-like impulse. Ready to draw extra mileage out of the Opposition disunity, Vasantrao Patil, the Congress(I) general secretary, sounded in advance the keynote message when he observed: 'The present Opposition is worse than a *khichdi*. In a *khichdi* the ingredients at least get boiled together. But it's not so now. They have enough fights at hand before they can really hope to take on the Congress(I)."

Patil was perhaps outlining the next campaign theme of the party which is certain to be pegged on opposition disunity. In 1980, the *khichdi* metaphor that Mrs Gandhi had patented to emphasise the Janata infighting worked wonders. By a quirk of history, the Opposition has come back a full circle. All that are left are regional parties, such as Urs' Kranti Ranga in Karnataka and matinee idol N.T. Rama Rao's Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh, besides the ruling National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir and the Marxists in Tripura, West Bengal and Kerala. With its rivals splitting into atoms, the likely slogan for the Congress(I) is: "Vote for the Opposition, if you can find it."

—SUMIT MITRA and PRABHU CHAWLA

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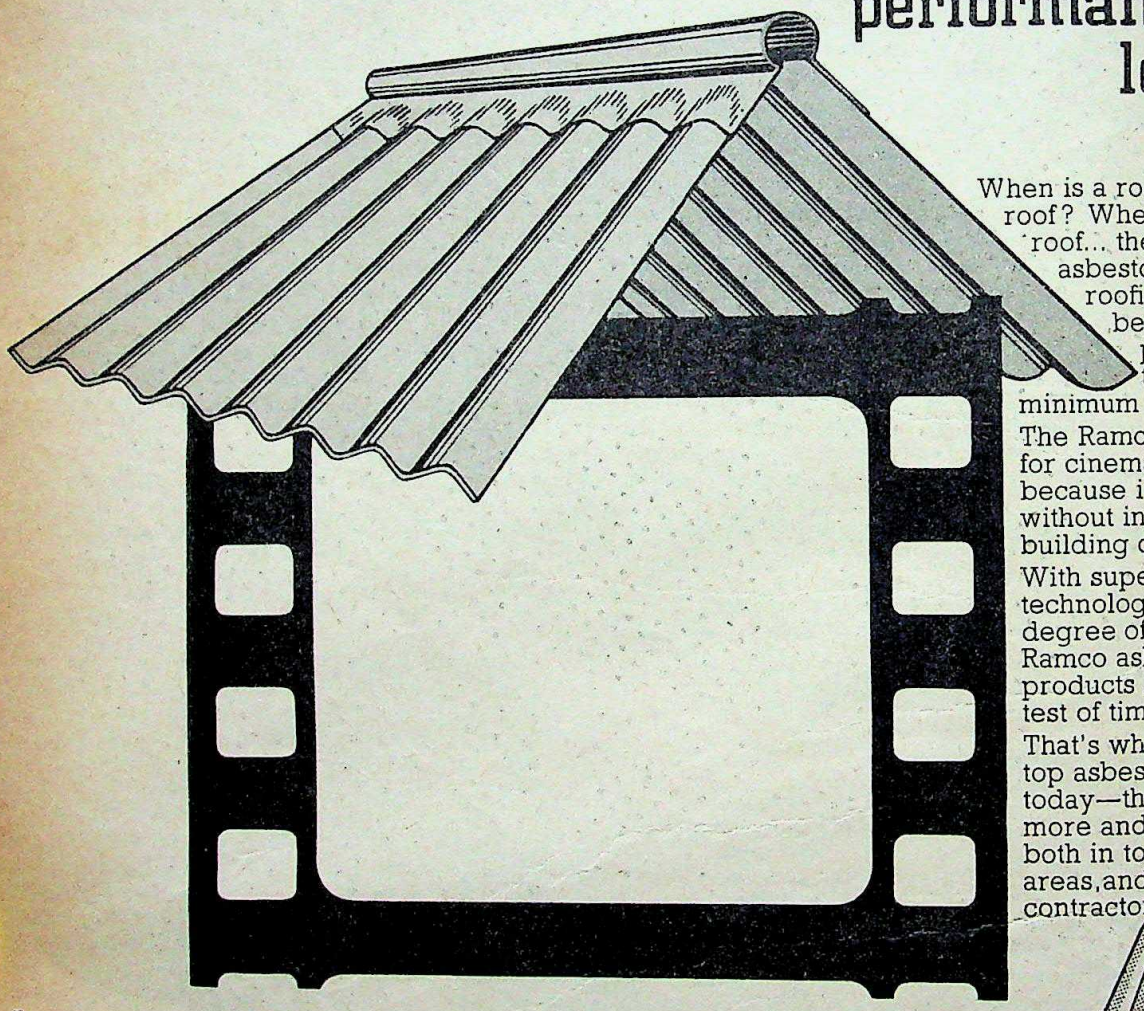

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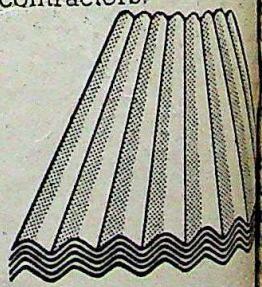

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AHARASHTRA

The Noose Tightens

IT WAS the culmination of a battle which has been in the limelight all over the country for more than 11 months. Triumphantly moving in for the kill after months of frustrating tussles in legislatures, law courts, and the back rooms of Indian politics, Bombay Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) General Secretary Ramdas Nayak last fortnight filed a comprehensive criminal case against former Maharashtra chief minister Abdul Rahman Antulay. Admitting Nayak's criminal complaint on the afternoon of August 9, Judge P.S. Bhutta of Bombay's sessions court effectively laid to rest the controversy which began when the BJP leader applied to Maharashtra's governor for permission to prosecute the chief minister on September 1, 1981. A warrant for Antulay's arrest, bailable at Rs 10,000 with a matching surety amount was promptly issued. The first hearing was fixed for September 3, and the notorious Antulay saga entered what might well be its final legal phase.

Nayak's move last fortnight was a direct response to the long-awaited gubernatorial sanction for prosecution, which finally came through on July 28. For a year, both Governor Mehra and his successor Idris Hasan Latif stalled the issue repeatedly while they reportedly waited for relevant verdicts from the successive higher courts of appeal. After the Supreme Court upheld a Bombay High Court verdict allowing the governor to exercise independent judgement, the green signal came in a five-page order from Latif: Nayak was given the go ahead to prosecute the discredited chief minister on various counts of accepting illegal gratification, barter of official decisions, and corruption in the matter of cement, alcohol and NOC (no objection certificate) allotments. The order states that the governor, having studied the prima facie evidence, found that in all three cases the allegations are "not frivolous or malafide and that a prima facie case exists".

The sanction was a rude blow to Antulay's credibility who, ironically enough, figures in all the trusts promoted by him. Seen by most legislators as a reprisal to the Nayak-led dissidence which had cost the Congress(I) one seat in the Legislative Council election through cross-voting, the sanction led to a swift change of loyalties by the fickle band. With three trustees of the prestigious Indira Gandhi Pratibha Pratishthan (IGPP)—Ajit Baburao Kerkar, Justice D.A. Masodkar, and Justice R.L. Agarwal—

Antulay: embattled

having already resigned following the Supreme Court decision, a notable fourth addition was Ramrao Adik. Once finance minister and trustee in the IGPP, Adik promptly resigned his trusteeship and began public pronouncements against the ousted chief minister. Former Antulay whip Bhaurao Patil changed rapidly from his belligerently dissident stance to one that was quietly low-key. Said Ram Naik, president of the Bombay BJP: "It is clear from the sanction that Mrs Gandhi has decided to jettison Antulay. Already his supporters are deserting him like rats from a sinking ship."

Nayak: triumphant

Defiant Move: Antulay's defiance, however, had clearly not waned. In a surprise move which came close on the heels of Latif's decision, the wily politician announced that he would hold a candid press conference on August 4, at which he would make a clean breast of things which have so far gone unsaid. "I will speak for so long that you may get tired," he told pressmen in what was seen by political observers as a blatant threat to Mrs Gandhi that he would disclose facts which she would prefer to have hidden. Every press office in Bombay, and many in Delhi and other cities, were sent cyclostyled invitations, and Antulay's much touted disclosures became news which competed for space with his leader's doings in the US.

But Antulay's latest move was, from all indications, little more than a threat. Only two days before it was scheduled, the press conference was suddenly called off amidst strategically placed rumours that the party leader had pleaded with Antulay through emissaries that he should not be hasty. However, notwithstanding claims that the high command was terrified at the thought of his revelations, there was little evidence to prove that this was so.

The case against Antulay cites little that is new, for it depends almost entirely for its narrative on published newspaper reports on the cement, alcohol and NOC scandals and a report of the favours received by the Tata Group after substantial contributions to his trusts. Explaining that the various "donation" scandals he was involved in make him liable for extortion, cheating, accepting illegal gratification and bartering his official decisions, the complaint charges Antulay under Sections 384, 420, 161 and 165 of the Indian Penal Code and Section 5 (2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Staggering List: The list of witnesses cited by the complainant is staggering. Among the 121 witnesses named—all unnamed donors to the trusts are also included—are Mrs Gandhi and Home Minister R. Venkatraman for their evidence on the naming of the IGPP, J.R.D. Tata and J.J. Bhabha for the alleged Tata-Antulay link, industrialist Vijay Mallya and former Bengal finance minister Asoke Mitra for information on the alcohol deals, a long line-up of builders who gained from Antulay's lucrative cement policy, and every trustee of the Antulay trusts, including his wife Nargis, London-based financier Nirmal Sethia, the Taj group's Kerkar, two Bombay High Court judges and Sheriff Sunil Dutt.

Nayak's counsel Ram Jethmalani is counting mostly on two sections in the Prevention of Corruption Act to help his case along. These are—Section 8, which offers immunity from prosecution to the person who gave the bribe, states in effect that nothing a witness says in court will be used against him in any subsequent prosecution, and Section 4, which according to Jethmalani, shifts the burden of proof onto the accused person once the plaintiff can prove that the man in the dock did in fact take illegal gratification, "Thus we won't be expected to prove our case beyond a shadow of doubt as is normal in criminal cases," explained Mahesh Jethmalani, who will assist his father "Once we prove that he received money in return for services rendered, the onus will shift onto him to prove his innocence."

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

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KERALA

An Eye For An Eye

THE PERIODICAL bloodbath has erupted once again in Kerala between the Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M). Since the Congress(I) took office on May 24, on the promise of enforcing law and order, there have been nine political killings and almost daily occurrences of explosions and assaults.

The latest spate of violence started with the murder of two RSS youths who were hacked to death in a temple at Chennithala in Alleppey district by a gang of Marxists in retaliation for an attack on Marxist leaders. Said a top RSS official: "The Marxists have prepared a hit list which contains mostly names of Marxist-turned RSS men."

Cross-fire: Caught in the cross-fire is the state's youthful Home Minister, Vayalar Ravi. Commented Ravi from his official residence, Xanadu: "They (the Marxists) are trying to smoke us out by making it appear that the law and order situation in the state has collapsed."

Answering to these charges a lungi-clad Nayanar said between puffs of his *beedi*: "While the Marxists were in power the Congress(I) said that police was ineffective and that we were aiding the murderers. Today the very same people claim that the Marxist opposition is creating law and order problems."

Nayanar also alleges that Ravi is protecting the RSS. The rumours started when Ravi won his Assembly seat from the Marxist stronghold of Shertallai. It was put about that he managed this only after he met RSS leaders in New Delhi who promised help in return for protection when Ravi took office. Ravi countered Ravi: "The RSS has never asked for protection. In fact, the Marxists begged me to give police protection to Govinda Pillai, a Marxist MLA, after two RSS workers were hacked to death at Chennithala and this was given."

Measures: In an effort to break the cycle of violence, Ravi has reshuffled the top echelons of the police force. The Government has also made it clear that it would not hesitate in the Central Reserve Police Force Act and implement the dreaded National Security Act, if the violence continues.

But Ravi's problems are not likely to end with this. To add insult to injury, Nayanar has alleged that the home minister is a CIA agent. The Marxist leader plans to distribute copies of former US ambassador

Nayanar (left) and Ravi: hot words

to India, Daniel Patrick Moynihan's book, *A Dangerous Place* during the next Assembly session. The book outlines how American money was used to bring down Kerala's first communist ministry in 1959 and again in 1967. Nayanar sees in this a trend carried on by Ravi who he says came back from a lecture tour of the US in 1980 with enough funds to bring down the Marxist government.

Ravi, who refused to take the allegations seriously, has decided to handle the charges à la Piloo Mody. "I am going to place a placard around my neck saying that I am a CIA agent," he laughed. But with or without the CIA, Kerala has become, with the political killings, an extremely dangerous place.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

WEST BENGAL

A Fighting Front

NO END seems to be in sight to the disputes within Bengal's ruling Left Front. The Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), comfortable in the knowledge that it has enough seats to hold on to power on its own, is sticking inflexibly to its stand that its smaller partners, the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RS) and the Forward Bloc (FB) must agree to a bifurcation of their portfolios. The smaller parties, on the other hand, are looking for a way to stay in the ministry without appearing to cave in to the CPI-M.

Both the RSP and the FB are in a quandary as they thought they could pressurise the Marxists by resigning. When this didn't work they found they had no cards left to play. They now have to suffer the embarrassment of going to office regularly as Chief Minister Joyti Basu has not accepted their resignations yet. But there is no doubt that work has been affected by the dispute. The FB and RSP ministers go to office but do little work on the plea that there is "no point working when our future is uncertain".

Rigid Stand: Neither party had expected the Marxists to take such a rigid stand. They are surprised to find that even Promode Das Gupta, the CPI-M general secretary, and Basu were not inclined to soften their position. In closed door meetings, RSP leader Jatin Chakravorty and the FB's Kanailal Bhattacharya tried unsuccessfully to persuade the CPI-M to a compromise formula which would enable them to stay in the ministry without losing face. The Marxists, however, made it quite clear that they intend to call the shots in this ministry. Rubbing salt into the wounds, Das Gupta reminded them that they had been signatories to an earlier agreement on portfolio bifurcation.

Apart from these problems there are divisions within the RSP and the FB on the bifurcation issue. It is well known that Public Works Minister Chakravorty wants to remain in the ministry at any cost. On the other hand the Panchayat Minister Debabrata Bandopadhyaya differs on almost every issue with Chakravorty. Similarly the FB Minister for Higher Education Sambhu Ghosh has reacted more mildly than his party colleagues to the bifurcation proposal which does not affect him.

But more important than the differences in the top leadership is that the rank and file of the parties are very unhappy with the present set-up. At the grass roots, workers feel that they are losing their identities and are in danger of being swamped by the Marxist cadres.

The RSP and the FB are also nervous about the presence of the Communist Party of India (CPI) in the Front. They fear that the Marxists will consider them expendable if ever the two communist parties come together. These fears were heightened when the Marxists put forward a proposal to take away the minor irrigation portfolio from the FB and give it to the CPI instead. But even the CPI have their grouses about the present set-up and their lone minister has not accepted any portfolio even though he has been drawing his salary for the last two months.

Threat: The Marxists have done little to alleviate such fears. At a party rally recently Basu told workers that the actions of the RSP and the FB constituted a grave threat to the 'Leftist Movement'. Basu went on to tell his workers to hold meetings all over the state to explain the party's stand. It was clearly a threat to the two parties that if they did not

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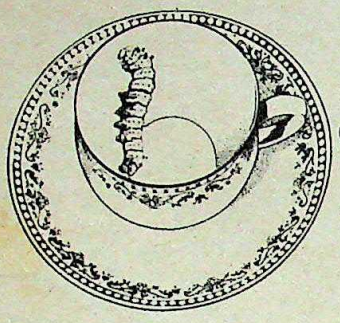

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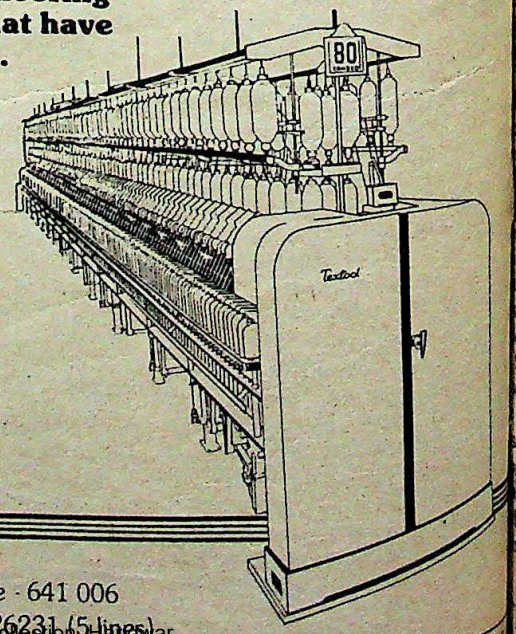

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...in line, the Marxists would spare no ...ort to further isolate them. As Basu said: ...e have never succumbed to any pressure ...will not do so now."

With a mere 47 seats in a house of 294, ...RSP and the FB are in no position to pose a ...threat to the Marxists even if they leave ...ministry. But the fear is that once out of ...ministry they will join hands with the ...position to embarrass the Marxists. For ...ance, the RSP has plans to organise a ...ger march in Calcutta towards the end of ...s month and if it sticks to its programme ...en its essentially anti-Marxist cadres may ...l provoke the Government in one way or ...other. But the Marxists are unrelenting ...d even this fear does not appear to be ...ough to change their minds about a ...frontation. Says a senior leader: "You ...conceding and there is no end to it. The ...dalsical and often questionable manner ...ctioning of the RSP and the FB has done ...f damage to the Front as a whole and ...nnot allow things to go on in this ...ner. We must have our own men ...ing vital sections of such important ...tments as health, panchayats and ...g which in any case are too big for a ...minister."

...m left) Bhattacharya, Ghosh, Paul and ...s after Front meeting: out in the cold

...Some months ago Basu remarked that ...econd Left Front Government should ...more cohesion than the first. He also ...ed that the Front must have a single ...f command. It looks now as if he is out ...vement this, even if it means saying ...ye to the partners who refuse to toe ...e.

—SUMANTA SEN

MADHYA PRADESH

An Antique Feud

THE LATEST round in Gwalior's battle between mother and son began with the minimum of fuss on July 31 at Gwalior airport when police quietly detained a short, balding man just as he was about to board the plane for Delhi. Sardar Sambhaji Chandoji Angre, personal secretary to Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Vice-President, Rajmata Vijaya Raje Scindia, and publisher of *Surya India*, was charged under Section 380 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Section 25 of the Antiquities and Art treasures Act with theft and an attempt to illegally export antiques valued by the police at around Rs 10 crore. The antiques were exhibits at the Maharaja Jiwajirao Museum, housed in the cavernous Jai Vilas Palace.

While Angre was detained, six truckloads of police moved to Rani Mahal, the Rajmata's residence, to search a section of it and recovered 36 out of 43 missing antiques. Simultaneously, they sealed the Jiwajirao Museum and Angre's residence Hiran Ban, which is part of the elaborate palace complex. Angre, for his part, cooled his heels at the Jhansi Road police station and was released on bail the following morning.

He was, predictably, breathing fire at Madhavrao Scindia, the Rajmata's son, and said that his arrest was the outcome of his purchasing *Surya India* earlier this year in a widely publicised deal. Madhavrao is currently at grips with his mother for control of the family's vast royal properties and has accused Angre of engineering a split between himself and the Rajmata.

The Dispute: The case had all the complications that mark royal family disputes over money. The police had hauled Angre in after a complaint was filed on June 18 by Mahendra Pratap Singh, private secretary to Madhavrao. The museum, set up in October 1964, occupies 36 rooms of the Jai Vilas Palace and has been managed by the Mannu Raje Trust since 1971. The Rajmata is chairperson, and the other trustees are Madhavrao, his wife Madhavi Raje, Colonel Eknath Trimbak Patil and Angre. Museum curator B.M. Namdeo says that the museum currently has on display more than 2,000 exhibits which attract nearly 4,000 tourists a month.

According to Ayodhyanath Pathak, deputy inspector general (DIG) (Gwalior range), who is in charge of the case, the trouble began when the museum closed for repairs for three months between June and September last year. Says Pathak: "When the museum reopened there was very little to show for three months of renovation." In September 1981, Madhavrao complained to the director, archaeology, in Bhopal, that he suspected that some artefacts were missing from the museum.

Following this, S.P. Pandey, the Archaeology Department's registration officer, served three notices to the museum's manager between January and June, saying that he would inspect the museum. Sushma Devi Singh, the manager and also the Rajmata's stepsister, pleaded for a postponement of the inspection on the plea that B.P. Deshmukh, the secretary of the trusts was absent. Says Pathak: "On June 22, Sushma Devi Singh wrote to Pandey saying that he would be informed when Deshmukh returned from leave. But till the date of the raid no information was given." Deshmukh insists that he was in fact absent all this while.

Pathak says he has definite information that during the closure of the museum last year, the 43 items were removed in a truck to New Delhi where they were kept for more than three months in the shopping arcade of a luxury hotel with the purpose of smuggling them out of the country through an American buyer. Pathak alleges that the deal fell through because of the excessive asking price.

This, however, is not the first time that Angre is facing charges of theft: in July 1973 he had been arrested for allegedly stealing books and documents from the palace office of advocate Suraj Pal Singh. The case was withdrawn during the Janata regime.

Ownership Controversy: BJP leaders insist that the current case is politically motivated. Says Shitla Sahay, legislator from Gwalior and former Janata minister who was with Angre when he was arrested: "Why did the police act only six weeks after the complaint was lodged? Their behaviour shows that there was an ulterior motive in Pathak's transfer to Gwalior only some weeks ago." Pathak predictably denies the charge, saying that after the filing of the first information report, CID teams from Bhopal visited Delhi several times as did Pathak. He hints darkly at the involvement of a prominent personality in the smuggling racket—facts that he says will be revealed in the following weeks. Pathak admits that he met Madhavrao in Delhi "but only because his property was involved".

Although the antiques have been

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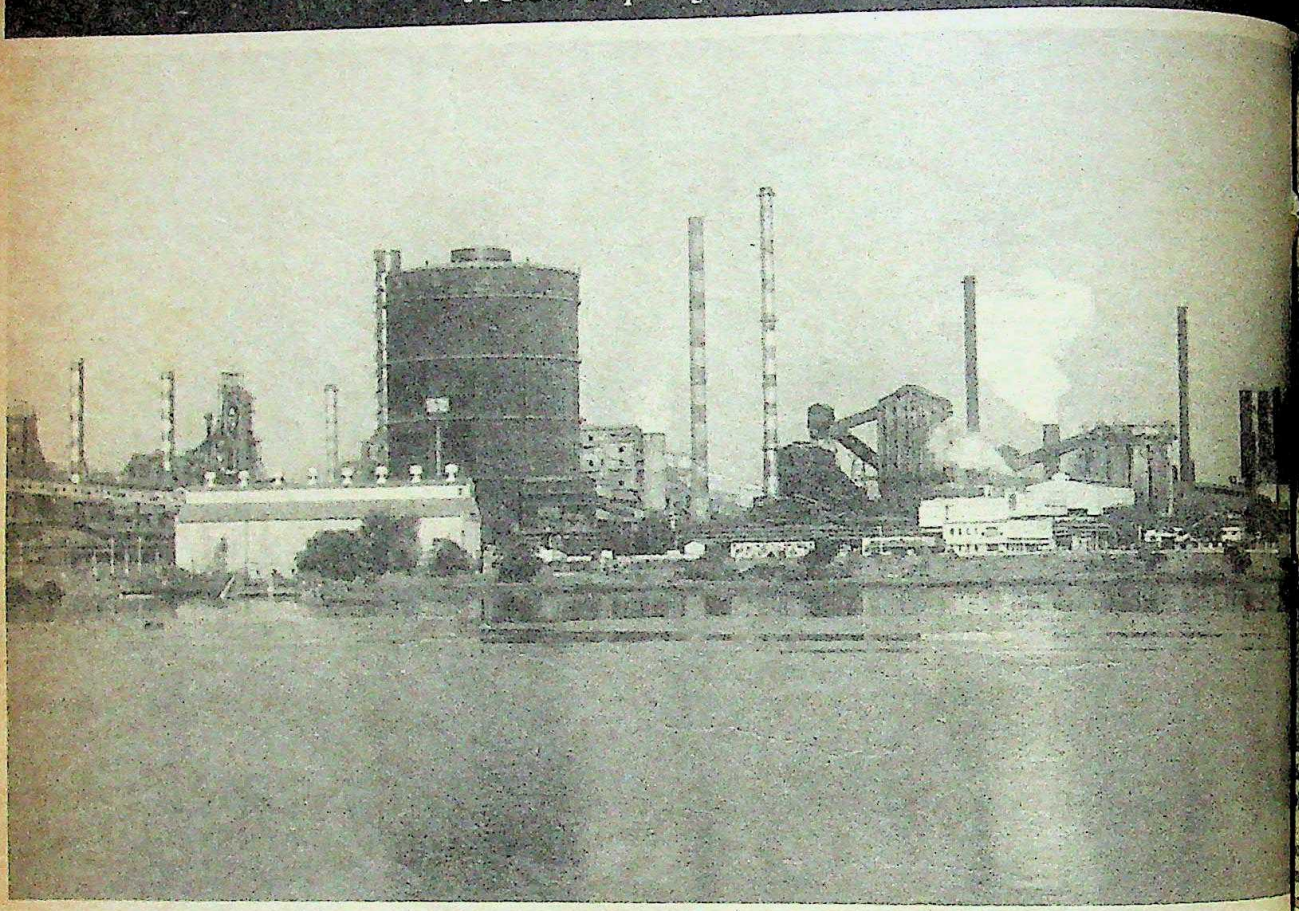
"...a museum piece that should charge visitors for the privilege of seeing its efficiency in operation."

A steel expert from Europe



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SADHANA STUDIO

SADHANA STUDIO

...men take antiques from the Rani Mahal ...d and Angre under escort: heated dispute

...overed, controversy surrounds their ...ership. Mahendra Pratap Singh ...ublishes two documents which he says ...ves that Madhavrao owns the antiques. ...e first is a letter from the Union Home ...istry dated July 12, 1961, which says that ...President of India recognises Madhavrao ...the ruler of Gwalior after his father ...jarao's death and he is "the sole ...essor to all private properties, movable ...immovable".

The second is an 18-year-old document ...ich lists 604 articles including the ...vered antiques: it is a receipt signed by ...museum's first curator, K.P. Nautyal, ...owledging that the articles received for ...ay in the museum are "the personal ...perty of His Highness Maharaja ...dhavrao Scindia and will be displayed in ...museum on loan". Says Mahendra ...gh Singh: "This clearly shows that the ...ques are Maharaja Madhavrao's ...perty and were removed illegally."

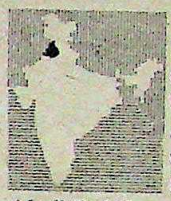
Rival Claims: After his release on bail, ...ge claimed that under the Hindu ...rvided Family law, the property was ...ed jointly by the Rajmata and her son. ...ocate Babulal Bhargava, the Scindias' ...adviser for the last 10 years, makes the point that clause 25 of the Mannu Raje Trust—a clause common to all trusts—empowers in effect the settlors of the trust deed (Madhavrao and the Rajmata) to remove any exhibit from the museum, as pieces of art, fittings, chandeliers and other fixtures "shall always remain the exclusive property of the settlors". It does not, however, indicate if they are empowered to do so jointly or individually. Moreover, this is in conflict with the first curator's receipt which acknowledges only Madhavrao as the owner.

Curator Namdeo, who seems to be firmly in the Rajmata's camp, points out that Madhavrao himself had in May 1981 removed from the museum two ivory photo frames and an ivory tower engraved with the Ramayana. But Namdeo admits that while he had a receipt signed by Madhavrao for the articles, he had none for those found in the Rani Mahal. Another crucial point is whether the articles were really in Angre's possession when they were recovered. The police argument is that the portion of the palace where the articles were found was occupied by Angre for long as it adjoined the hall which was his office. Retorts Bhargava: "Are there any rent receipts to show that this portion was in Angre's possession?"

The Rajmata herself, at a press conference in Delhi last week, demanded a judicial probe into the alleged theft, and charged that Angre was being harassed to give up *Surya India*. She also said that the assets belonged to the Scindia family and that by no stretch of imagination could Angre have been implicated in the case. If she takes the stand in court that the articles were in the Rani Mahal with her knowledge, Madhavrao would be in a fix since he will have to press charges against his own mother—and this Angre knows only too well. —SREEKANT KHANDEKAR in Gwalior

PUNJAB

Growing Tension



THE TENUOUS fabric of law and order in India's granary buckled under two blows last fortnight. On August 4, former chief minister Prakash Singh Badal led over a thousand Akali Dal (Longowal) volunteers into buses requisitioned by police in Amritsar in a peaceful protest against, among other things, the arrest of Amrik Singh, Tara Singh and other close associates of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. Even as the protesting *jatha* said its final prayers at the historic Manji Sahib Gurudwara close to the Golden Temple before setting out to court arrest, frail and middle-aged Gurbaksh Singh was hijacking an Indian Airlines Boeing 737 to Lahore, with a dressed-up rubber ball for a 'weapon' and a list of demands scribbled on a page torn from a note-book in his pocket.

Taken singly, the two events in the Sikh holy city of Amritsar were problems enough for Chief Minister Darbara Singh in Chandigarh and for the Centre. But taken together, they add up to much more. The demands of the Akali Dal morcha and those of Gurbaksh confronting his hostages coincided to a large extent: both wanted the Union Government to accept the Anandpur Sahib resolution on autonomy in specific areas for states, both wanted imprisoned extremist Sikhs released, both demanded the declaration of Amritsar as a holy city. Gurbaksh Singh differed from the Akali Dal's non-violent protestors only in asking for $500,000 (Rs 45 lakh) and permission to broadcast over All India Radio.

Abortive Stroke: The hijacking ended rather quickly. The Lahore Airport authorities parked oil tankers across the runway to prevent the Boeing, which was hit by a bird over Lahore, from landing. Captain V.K. Mehta told Gurbaksh that fuel would last only 20 minutes and the hijacker had no choice but to allow the plane to return to Amritsar. At Amritsar's Raja Sansi Airport, Jullundur lawyer Prem Singh, a passenger, persuaded the hijacker to allow women and children to leave the plane; later, a senior Akali Dal legislator, Prakash Singh Majithia, persuaded Gurbaksh himself to surrender. Majithia had apparently been despatched by Longowal.

Although Gurbaksh's capers took up more space in newspapers, the August 4

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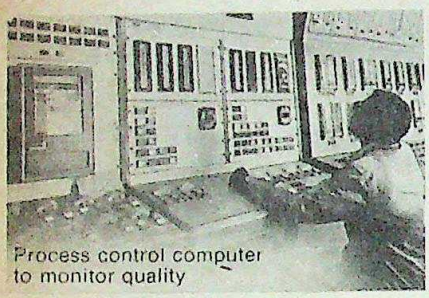
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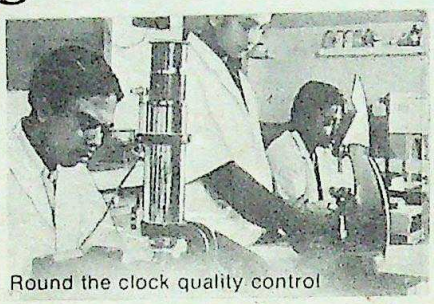
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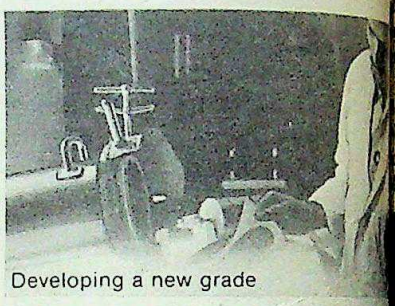
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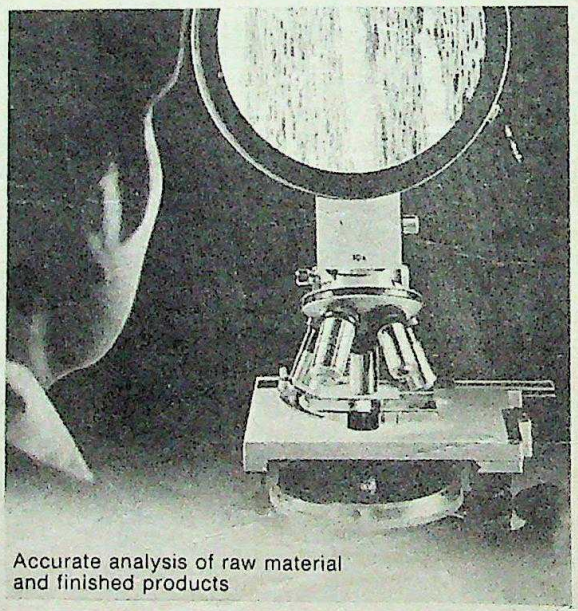
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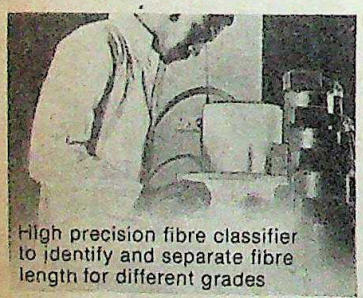
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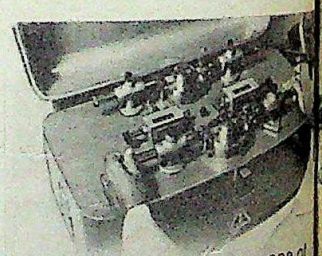
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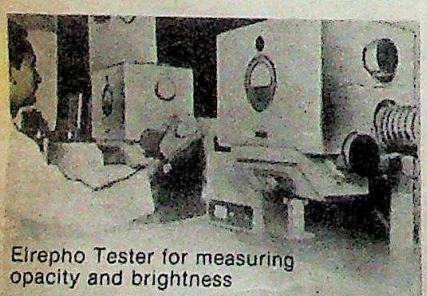
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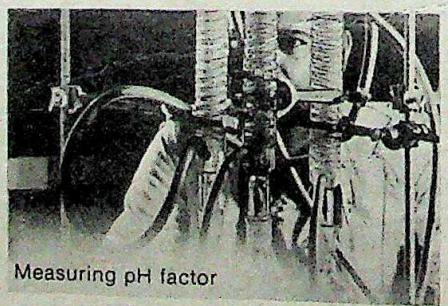
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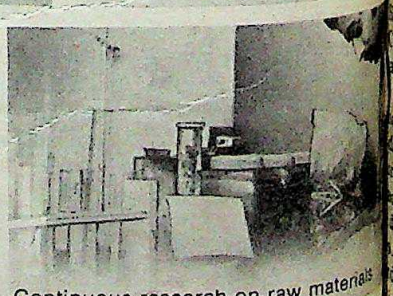
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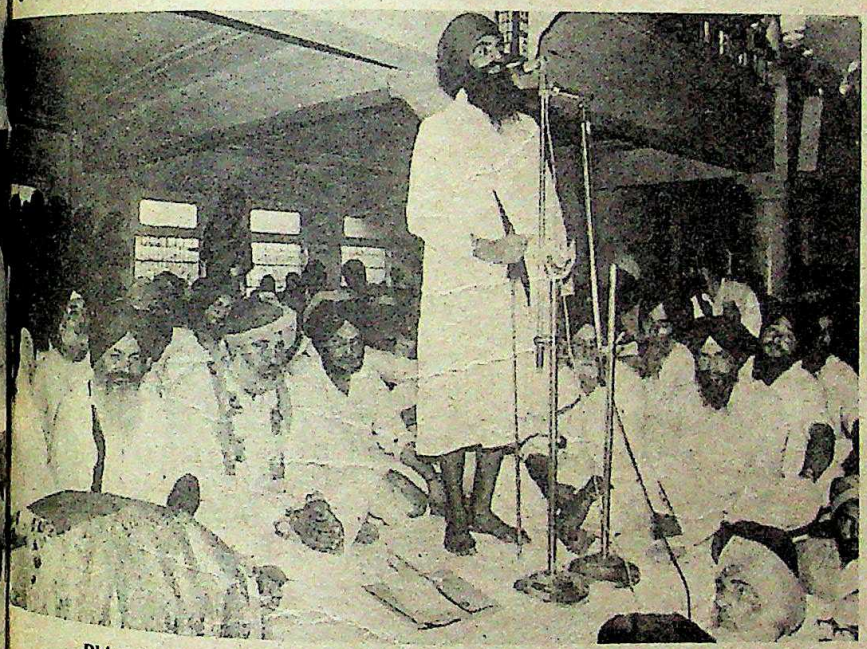
morcha was much more significant. Bhindranwale addressed the Akali Dal gathering before the volunteers courted arrest; this could very well be a watershed event in Punjab politics. Sant Longowal's Dal has long considered Bhindranwale an irritant; the morcha could be the first step towards some kind of understanding. Significantly, Gurbaksh, who before he became notorious was a simple *granthi* in a village gurdwara in Haryana's Kurukshetra district, had met Bhindranwale twice. The sympathy between Punjab's Sikh moderates and extremists is there, and is probably growing.

Longowal disowned the hijacking; Bhindranwale, ensconced in his Guru Nanak Niwas retreat, kept quiet. The two 'incidents', taken with the bomb blasts in Moga and Jullundur that killed two people, teers courted arrest; on the following day the only Akali Dal member of the Lok Sabha, Lehna Singh Tur, did the same with 65 others. On August 6 another batch of 105 registered their peaceful protest.

What is significant, however, is that the overkill was thought necessary—as indeed it might be in the future. The Akalis are getting a little restive because earlier protests—the *nehr roko* cry at Kapuri for the stoppage of the Sutlej-Yamuna link canal and the exhortation not to pay cooperative loans—had gone unheeded. Even Akali legislators paid back their loans and Darbara Singh claimed that loan recovery had improved by 6 per cent. If it finds more of its calls going unheeded, the Akali Dal might shift more and more to an isolationist position—it has already come under attack from the other main opposition parties.



Bhindranwale addresses the Akali Dal morcha: growing empathy

brought into sharp relief the ominous ion between Hindus and Sikhs. Recent- Sanatan Dharmis and Arya Samajis met Chandigarh and Patiala and threatened ation if Hindus were not protected.

Jittery Authorities: The prevailing sphere also had its effect on the police. ay before Badal and his men were to n arrest, rumours of impending bomb ks had kept the police of Amritsar and district administration nervously on their . Five thousand policemen—from the der Security Force, the Central Reserve ce Force and the Haryana Po- —strengthened the bandobast. Even the y was alerted. Nearly four dozen buses ed 4,200 warrants had been prepared. As it ed out, the overkill was cessary—only 1,032 Akali Dal volun-

Until now the Sikh activists have not lived up to the boast of Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee President Gurcharan Singh Tohra: "We are going to our capital, Amritsar, and you will see the Government paralysed." Badal, much more moderate, fully realises the dangers of getting closer to extremists; in Chandigarh he said: "No opposition party is prepared to understand, much less the ruling party. They brand us communal without realising the dangers of a religio-political movement." The Akali Dal, sources suggest, is trying to come to an understanding with the Congress(I) for the sharing of power. But a larger understanding is imperative if the extremists are not to draw politics into the pits, and drag the state in with them.

—GOBIND THUKRAL in Amritsar

UTTAR PRADESH

Gunpowder Conspiracy

FOLLOWING an off chance tip, successive raids by the police recently unearthed what is probably one of the biggest ammunition rackets in Uttar Pradesh so far. A vital lifeline of live cartridges to the underworld and small dacoit gangs, the "Gunpower Plot" stood defused after a flash raid on an illicit one-room ammunition factory in Lucknow's busy Chowk on July 21 this year.

Run by Mohammed Hanif, a former ammunition factory worker, the factory yielded a cache of 85 finished live cartridges, 300 empties, and another 500 unfinished bullets, besides an electric plastic moulding machine, hundreds of lead pellets, brass percussion caps and gunpowder. Prominent among the seven arrested after the raid was Lucknow socialite Jagdish Singh Sarna, a licenced arms and ammunition dealer who owns a shop—"Singh Gun House"—on the crowded La Touche Road.

Sarna stood implicated by the seizure of 18 boxes of 450 live plastic-encased cartridges which were made from Sarna Gun House whose licenced proprietor is not Sarna but his wife, Kartar Kaur. Investigating police officials however insisted that Kaur was nothing more than a "sleeping partner" while Sarna actually called the shots.

Key Link: Suresh Pal Singh, senior superintendent of police (SSP), Lucknow, alleged that Sarna was undeniably the key linkman in the ammunition racket, since he was marketing Hanif's illegally manufactured cartridges. Elaborating on the implications of the raids, Singh said that this was the first time that an illicit cartridge manufacturing unit had been busted in the state. Till now it had been assumed that while procuring countrymade weapons was easy the firepower for them was not, since nobody was 'manufacturing' cartridges. At most, only empties (which were hardly readily available) would be refilled, put in standard cartridge company boxes and palmed off secretly at a huge profit.

Hanif, who in the mid-'70s had worked in a Lucknow-based ammunition factory, said in his police statement that he was contacted a few months back by several arms and ammunition dealers (he named only one, Sarna) who were willing buyers of cartridges in case he could manufacture

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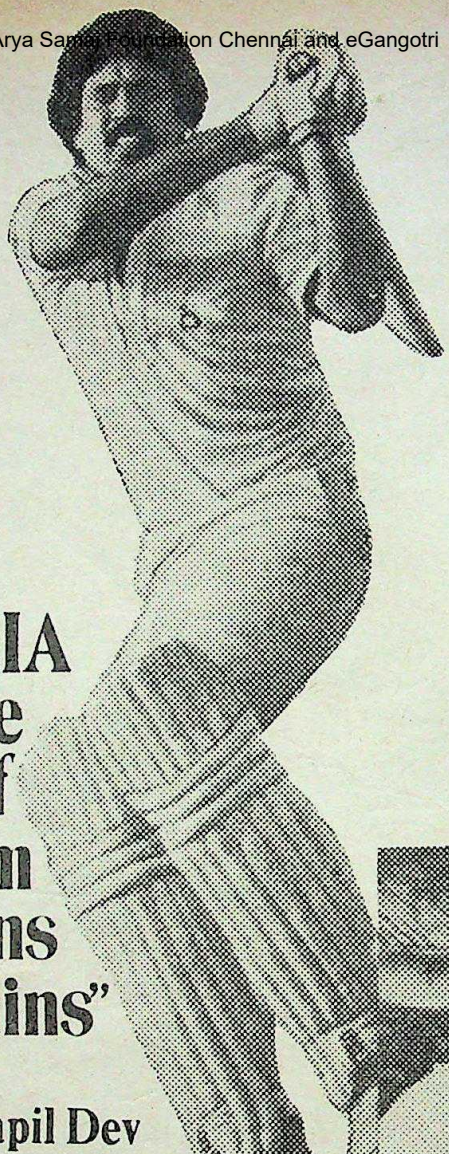

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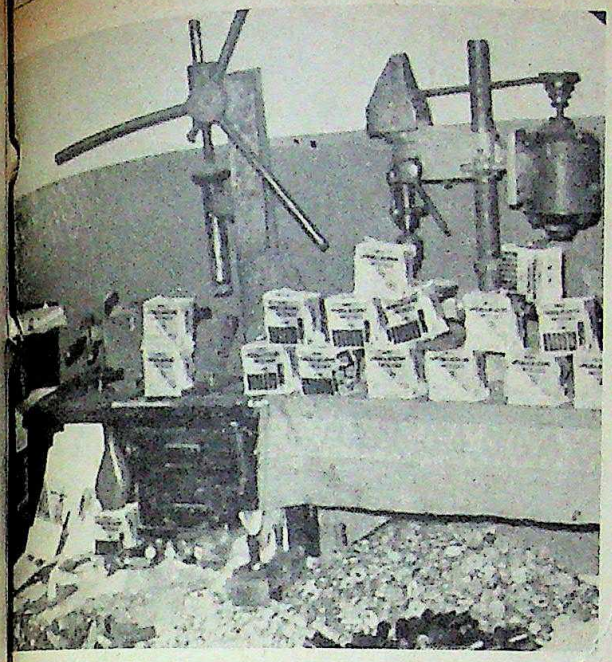

(Clockwise from left) **Hanif's ammunition factory in Chowk, Hanif and Sarna: lucrative trade**

...n. He further revealed that for the first ...signment of 1,200 cartridges, Sarna had ...paid him a cash advance. But only 750 ...ges had actually been supplied to him. ...a meanwhile continued to claim that he received only 500 cartridges, which were ...entered in his ammunition stock ...ster.

...In his case report, Devendra Bahadur ..., circle inspector, Chowk, pointed out ...out of the 500 cartridges which Sarna ...med to receiving, only 450 could be ...ed. Of the remaining 50, those sold ...ost valid licences numbered 20, while 30 ...e still missing. However, Sarna, now out ...bail, told INDIA TODAY that he had ...chased the entire lot from a licenced ...er of a Jammu-based cartridge manufac...g company and paid Rs 1,250 for them. ...he, "In any case, in the 25 years that I ...been in the business, I have sold them ...to valid licence holders, never to any ...existing thugs." Alleging that the police ...trying to implicate him, he added: "I ...made to sign two blank papers just ...e I was shifted to Balrampur hospital ...d midnight following severe chest ...s".

Lucrative: The economics of this clan...ine trade is quite lucrative. The manufac...of these plastic-encased cartridges costs ...about Rs 2 each, and if sold to licencees ...they fetch Rs 4.50 each but when sold ...e black market they yield nearly five ...that amount. The police who have still ...ace some of the other shadier deals ...may have entered into, are now wor...by the possible existence of such illicit ...unition factories in other districts also, especially in dacoit infested areas and the ravine tract on the Uttar Pradesh-Madhya Pradesh border. Keeping Hanif's customer list a closely guarded secret, the police feel it can lead to more arrests as they suspect the existence of an organised state network.

A link with some Delhi businessmen has already been established, since Hanif's suppliers of package cartons may also have supplied them to other such illicit factories in the state. Said the police public relations officer: "We might be taking a long shot but we will hit the target."

—ANAND SAGAR

BIHAR

Fighting Back

IT HAS now become a familiar pattern. Fabricate a corruption charge against obdurate officers and bundle them out. To their dismay politicians in Bihar found that not all officials take it lying down. In an unusual step Sudhish Narain Singh, the seniormost officer of the Indian Police Service (IPS) in Bihar and reputedly an extremely able officer decided to fight just such an order. And last fortnight he went to court to challenge his supersession to the office of the inspector general of police (IGP).

Making a series of allegations against Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra and his government, Sudhish listed in the court the "malafide actions" in ignoring his claim to the post of director-cum-inspector general of police and against the vindictive actions of Mishra.

Frequent Shifts: Sudhish's troubles came to a head on February 1 when the Government ordered a major shake-up in the police force allegedly to make way for a set-up favourable to the chief minister. G. Narayan, a soft-spoken IPS officer junior to Sudhish, was promoted as IGP; M.K. Jha, the controversial inspector general (IG) at Military Police, who allegedly prevented officials investigating the Bhagalpur blinding cases, was granted special allowances equivalent to IGP; and Lalit Vijay Singh, who, as deputy inspector general (DIG) Crime, had exposed the 'guilty men' behind Bhagalpur blindings, was first shifted as DIG (Home Guards) to team up with Sudhish and later shunted out to the post of DIG (Economic Offences). Besides the major shake-up scores of superintendent level officers were shifted frequently. According to state secretariat sources the race for the highest post was between Narayan and Jha and Sudhish's name did not figure at all during private consultations held by the chief minister.

Sudhish is said to have incurred the chief minister's wrath for refusing to withdraw cases against him for mishandling the funds of the Patna Urban Corporation Bank and the misuse of jeeps of the Bihar Citizens' Council. Sudhish had also refused to close corruption charges against some officials close to Mishra when he was IG (Vigilance). This refusal, Sudhish said, was consistent with "his honest discharge of duties" but it led to his peremptory ouster from the post within two and a half months. He was then appointed chairman-cum-managing director of the Bihar Police Building Construction Corporation where he remained for 11 months and was then moved to the post of IG (Home Guards).

Sudhish: taking a firm stand

As if this was not enough, in April Mishra told the state Assembly that there were a string of charges against Sudhish and L.V. Singh relating to financial irregularities, tampering with files and questionable orders. He said that the charges have all been referred to the vigilance department. In the same breath Mishra denied that Sudhish was being harassed.

Oblique Hints: This was not all. Mishra even hinted obliquely that Sudhish might be arrested. He also argued that the post of IGP was given on the basis of seniority-cum-

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merit and this was not the first time that the seniormost officer had been superseded. He pointed out that Sudhish had been given special allowance equivalent to that of an IGP.

But there can be no disputing that Sudhish has an impeccable service record, at least as good as, and probably better than any other officer in the state. This has been recognised on several occasions. He won the Police Medal in 1967 and later won a bar to it in 1974, the President's Police Medal (1975), the Vishist Seva Medal for services in the J & K border and the Western Star Medal for active service in the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war. Sudhish, a freedom fighter jailed in 1942–43, was awarded a Tamrapatra. He has also been recommended for a freedom fighter's pension.

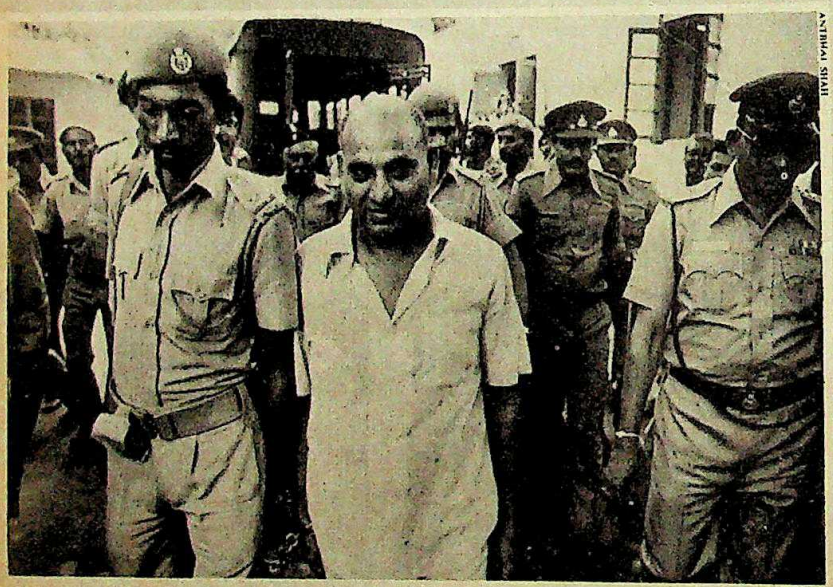
Although Sudhish was posted as director (Prosecution), after the post was upgraded to suit him, he requested the court to issue a show-cause notice to the Government and the chief minister as to why they should not be enjoined to fill up the post of director-cum-inspector general of police in conformity with the Centre's directives; to explain and justify the appointment of G. Narayan as IGP; and why his transfer to the upgraded post of director (Prosecution) should not be quashed. The High Court rejected the first two and dismissed the third when the Government assured that Sudhish would be given any post equivalent to the IGP rank.

Partial Victory: Sudhish who now lives in a modest two-room apartment in the state Circuit House in Patna has partially won the battle. It remains to be seen whether he will now go to the Supreme Court in appeal. Sources close to him believe that he may be deterred by the state Government's threat to prosecute him on corruption charges.

Sudhish is not the only police officer to go to court alleging harassment by the state Government. D.P. Ojha, superintendent of police, who as vigilance officer inves... the Urban Bank case against the chief... ter is also said to have been under co... pressure. Exasperated he went to... Supreme Court which last Decembe... dered the Government to give him... equivalent post without any financial... break in service.

The Sudhish episode has the cast... inevitable in Bihar. During the curre... ssion of the state Legislature, several... bers spoke about Sudhish's harassme... Baidyanath Pandey, a Lok Dal MLA... went a step further openly threaten... help raise a "Bhumihar Sena" to com... the injustices being meted out to a mem... his caste. He said: "Bhumihar offic... honesty and integrity were being victi... in a planned manner by the present G... ment." The threat, if carried out, ma... Bihar's police force down the middle.

—FARZAND...



ANTHRAI SHAH

S.N. BAKHIA

Bakhia in police custody: hemmed in

Firmly Bound

IT IS likely to become a familiar scene in the months to come. A handcuffed Sukur Naran Bakhia stepped from a police van into an Ahmedabad courtroom. Once inside, he stood with his head bowed as the prosecution unfolded its case against him.

For many it came as a surprise that Bakhia, who is alleged to be one of the biggest smugglers in the country, could even be brought handcuffed to court. But it was an indication that the Government is at last determined to nail Bakhia. And now they are particularly piqued by the fact that he has managed to outwit them and slither out of their grasp on two occasions already.

Their two debacles convinced law enforcement agencies that they could not rely on the possibility of any one charge sticking. Accordingly they delved into the past to dig out anything that might possibly be used against him.

The plan was put into operation the moment Bakhia walked out of the Goa court followed by his battery of lawyers, including former law minister Asoke Sen. Superintendent of Police S.B. Deol slapped handcuffs on him and informed him that he was under arrest. A scuffle followed as Bakhia's bodyguards rushed to the aid of their master. But the police ha... prepared for this eventuality and ha... turned up in strength. Bakhia was the... flown to Ahmedabad and remanded in... judicial custody for three days and la... produced in court.

Tax Case: The case against Bakhi... related to a 1974 income tax fraud invol... ing Rs 75 lakh. The eight-year-old ca... concerned a crossword puzzle racket. T... competition was alleged to have been m... to convert black money into white as... those days the prizes of such competitio... were not taxable. The modus operandi... said to have been that several holders... black money entered the competition a... awarded themselves huge amounts... prizes. After raiding Bakhia's house a... the offices of the crossword firm... Daman, income tax sleuths discover... that Rs 75 lakh had been given out... prizes.

At the end of the hearing Ahme... bad city Metropolitan Magistrate H... Mahida ruled that Bakhia was not... leave the country until the income... case was disposed of. He was released... conditional bail after he deposited... 25,000 in cash and two sureties of... 50,000 each. In addition he was to pre... himself in court every fortnight.

Bakhia's freedom was short-li... Within days the Gujarat High Co... cancelled the bail. And even if he... succeed in getting this judgement re... versed, the Government is said to... have several charges up its sleeve to... him with. And it seems certain that for... next few months his life will be e... ctuated with policemen, jails and co...

—RAMESH ...

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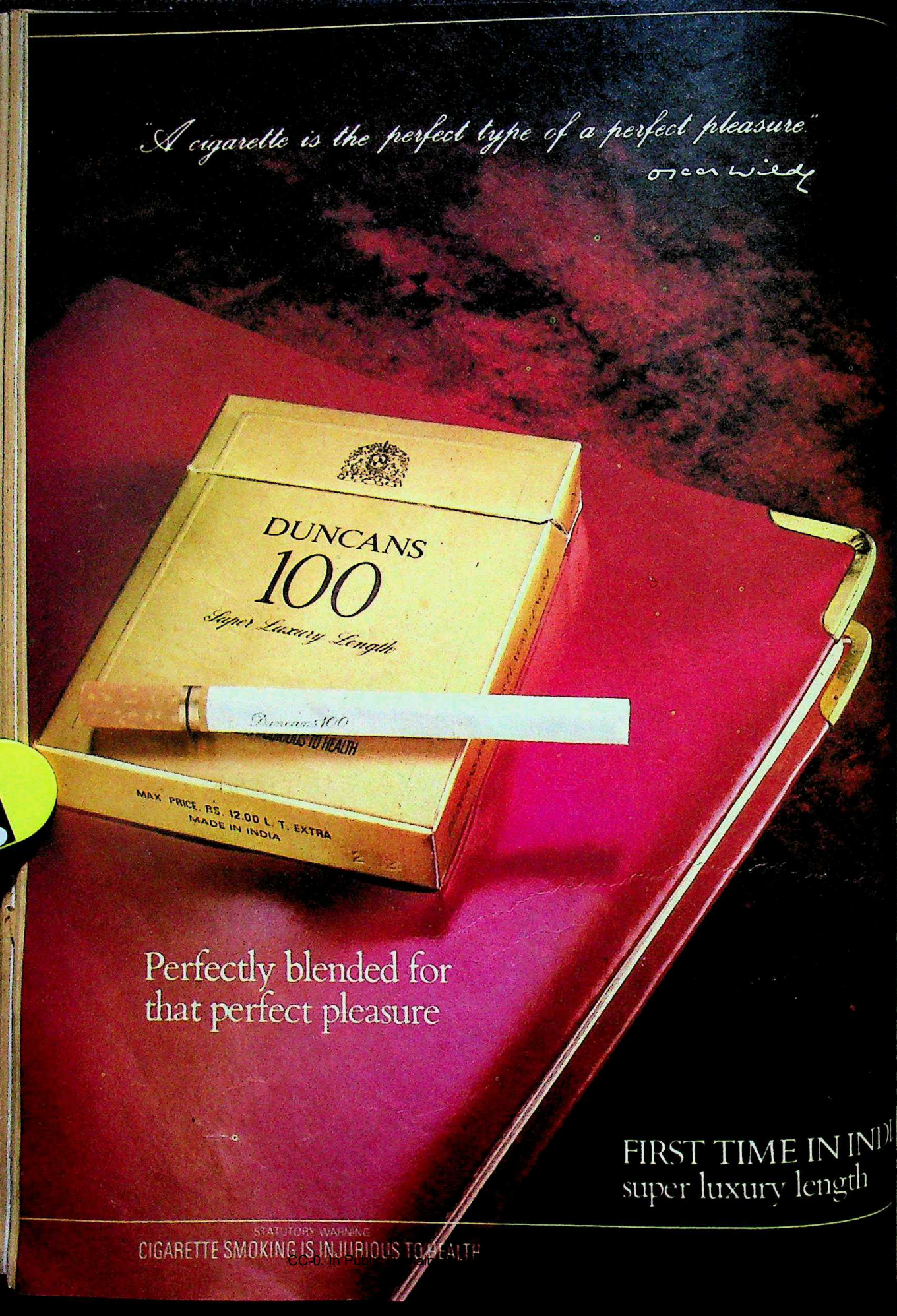

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HRA PRADESH

he Bridal Bazaar

IN A hot and stuffy cell in a Dubai jail, a 20-year-old Indian girl counts the days until her release and eventual journey home to the sanctuary of her home town, Hyderabad. Shabana came he glitter of the Gulf nine years ago as the e of a 65-year-old Arab who had paid mpoverished parents Rs 5,000 for the ge. Unfortunately, Shabana's dreams rned into nightmares—her husband edly maltreated her, neglected her three ters and refused to let her visit her ly in India. Shabana had a baby boy by dian tailor, Ahmed Khan, which her band claimed as his own. She and her were jailed for a year for their 'illicit onship'—an unusually light sentence in rict Middle East.

The girl from Hyderabad has learnt her n, but other girls from the city, goaded oor and avaricious parents, are still ed by the Gulf's glitter, personified by erous looking Arabs. These tourists, may be only gardeners, factory workers drivers back home, choose their bride line-ups arranged in hotel rooms by ent touts—male and female—from bay and Hyderabad. A quickly conducts the mar-. The couple spend two s together, after which the e finds herself on the . Although the exact num- of such unions is not yet wn, the trade in nubile flesh assumed endemic propor- in Hyderabad over the last le.

There is, of course, money profit in it for everyone, the girl. The parents, ly rickshaw-pullers, cycle ers, roadside barbers, and able and fruit sellers, are y bought cheaply. The brokers get ut from the Arab and from the girl's sum settled on a Muslim bride by the which stays with her if he divorces which ranges between Rs 1,000 and Rs . The agents leave the parent Rs 300 to , and even collect Rs 10 for each day lodged at the agent's house.

w Regulations: In a belated recogni- of the racket, the Andhra Pradesh Social Welfare Advisory Board last ght sponsored a meeting which dis- countermeasures. Says board Chair- Durga Bhaktavatsal: "The major

Khaliq (left) and Aliya Bee: heinous crimes

hurdle is the scanty information about such exploitation: it is an irony that the state directorate of women and child welfare does not have any single case of such a victim on record." The special task force of the Hyderabad police recently rescued 16 prospective brides and arrested agents Hussain Abdul Khaliq and Aliya Bee on charges of cheating and conspiracy. Says Hyderabad Police Commissioner T. Ponnaiya: "Tragically, it is only on these two counts that we can book them for the heinous crime." The task of the police and the authorities is made all the more difficult because the girls' parents are reluctant to talk.

A prospecting Arab (left) and 'newly-weds': short-term 'contracts'

Most Arabs are now opting for the 'hire-a-bride' system and do not take their wives home to avoid problems with Indian officials and their governments. A safety regulation is to issue passports to Indian brides, when the age difference is more than 15 years, only after checking with the Arab's embassy or consulate. But more checks are obviously needed: one suggestion is to ask the prospective bridegroom to deposit Rs 30,000 as security and also as a deterrent to his divorcing the girl. But mullahs feel that this is against the tenets of Islam.

Most people are, nevertheless, agreed on the need for documentation. From this month, the Andhra Pradesh Wakf Board is to record personal details of Arabs intending to marry Hyderabadi girls. A Wakf Board member warns: "We are divided on this, though. It can be interpreted as interference in personal affairs." Lawyer Sadat Jahan Rizvi suggests that foreigners seeking to marry Indian girls be asked to register themselves with an independent authority. Says Rizvi: "The Wakf Board issues the marriage certificates and, therefore, a separate agency should register eligible foreigners and, draw up lists of would-be brides." The social welfare board, in its recent meeting, also suggested the setting up of an exclusive registry for international marriages.

Easy Process: One reason why Muslim marriages are easy in Hyderabad is that the Kazis Act in Andhra Pradesh allows any person, besides government appointed *kazis*, to perform a *kazi*'s functions and conduct a marriage with two witnesses. This is a perfect legal foundation for the unscrupulous agents. Such marriages cannot be contested in court although the *kazis* cannot issue marriage certificates. The state Government is anxious to do away with this clause but has predictably met with opposition. Says Anjum Arifi, secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Kazis Association: "It is a religious practice to allow any person acceptable to the community to do the duty of a *kazi*. This must not be curbed. To check the fake marriages, the facts must be gathered from the bridegroom to find out his real intentions."

As yet, the regulations are only for those who wish to take their brides home. For the girls picked up with such efficiency and abandoned in India, only welfare schemes for destitutes exist. The social welfare board chairman suggested free legal aid for the exploited girls and possible remarriage. Anwar Moazzam, professor of Islamic studies at Osmania University has a long-term solution: "Hyderabad men who bring back money from the Arab lands should invest it in industry instead of real estate to provide stable jobs for poor Muslim boys. Then the girls will take care of themselves." That, however, belongs to the distant future: for the present, Hyderabad's Muslim maidens will continue to be attractive merchandise in a flourishing bazaar.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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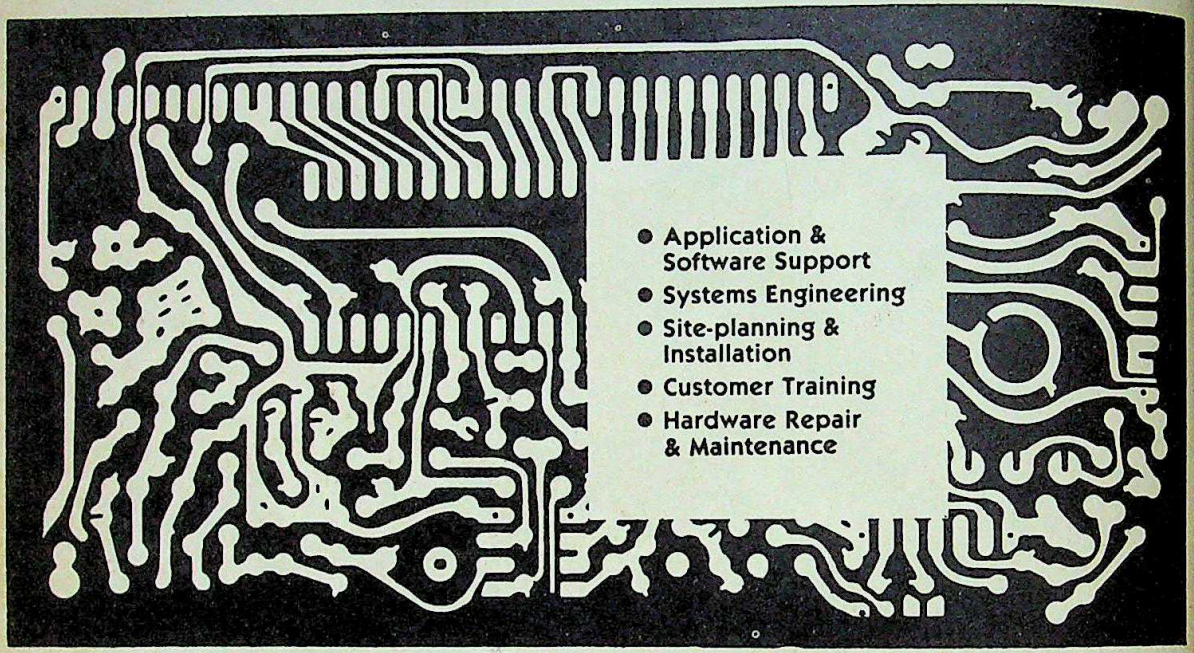

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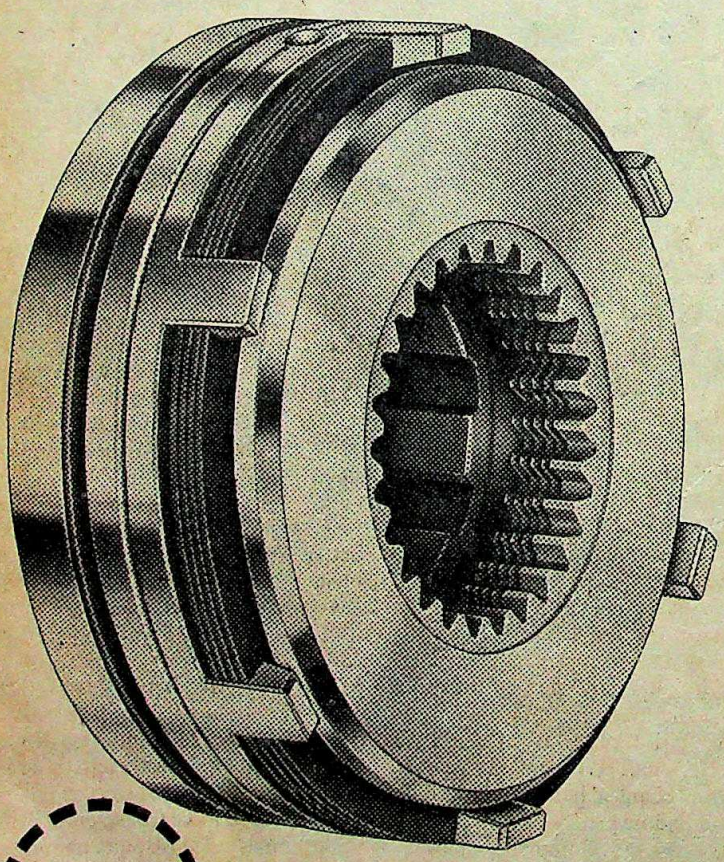

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NARCOTICS

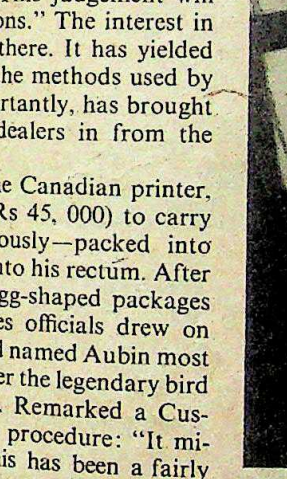
The Golden Goose

FOR MOST law enforcement officers handling narcotics cases, the real work starts only after the drug traffickers caught. So, when Additional Chief tropolitan Magistrate, J.M. Malik, con- Roland Joseph Aubin, 28, and Ovila Riendeau, 50, for attempting to gle 123 gm of heroin out of the country was jubilation. The cause for jubilation about the catch—but the judgment which set a very useful precedent. Malik that the statement of a public servant a confession backed by a recovery could ify a conviction.

Seeing this as definite strengthening of law enforcement agencies' hands, a toms official said: "At most times it mes difficult to obtain positive evidence. accused invariably change their state- ts a dozen times. This judgement will in future convictions." The interest in case does not end there. It has yielded l information on the methods used by ers and more importantly, has brought ve suppliers and dealers in from the e.

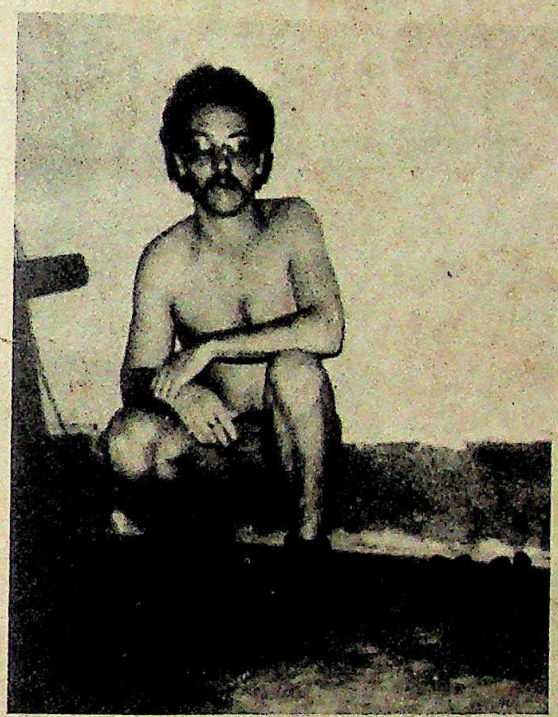
Aubin, a small time Canadian printer, hired for $5,000 (Rs 45, 000) to carry drug most ingeniously—packed into ams and inserted into his rectum. After ecovery of these egg-shaped packages their hiding places officials drew on hood memories and named Aubin most 'golden goose' after the legendary bird laid golden eggs. Remarked a Cus- official about this procedure: "It mi- hock many, but this has been a fairly dard method amongst carriers. Women been known to contraband in vagina. The is almost impos- to detect unless has been a tip-

Close Watch: In case the tip- ame from the dian Police and dian Customs s were able to ccessfully moni- ery step of the goose, his sponsor and their contacts. ail of Aubin and Riendeau, who has dentified as one of the three financers deal was followed from the moment ew out of Montreal on April 4 to y via New York. On reaching they both checked into the three-star Sea King Hotel before leaving for Goa's popular Vagatoor Beach Resort.



Malik: setting a precedent

Intelligence officials feel that it is here, while apparently acquiring only a tan, that the deal was struck with Jaques Asselin, 28, a well-known narcotics dealer who supplies high grade heroin. On April 16, a series of telegrams between Bombay and Goa alerted Customs officials about the state of the transactions. The first read 'Baby arrived, 5 lbs; mama feeling OK'; the second was 'Happy birthday though late'; and the final saying 'Uncle Henry deceased. Come soon' was interpreted by them as a signal for the traffickers to move.



Aubin with his eggs (heroin): ingenious methods

The guess was correct. The two Canadians flew into Bombay the next day and checked into the five-star Taj Mahal Hotel with Asselin, just 2 km away, at the Hotel President. The small consignment, believed to be a test run, changed hands and was then packed into condoms.

Caught Unawares: Completely unaware of the strict surveillance Aubin and Riendeau arrived at Delhi's Palam Airport on the evening of April 18 to board the Air France flight to New York. As they reported for Customs clearance at the international departure hall, drug enforcement officers moved in. Reports a Customs official: "On searching Aubin, one egg-like packet was found wrapped in the sock of his right foot. When he was asked to undress completely, Aubin knew that the game was up and did not resist further. As he removed his underwear two similar packages fell. Aubin was then asked to move his bowels and as he complied three more egg-shaped packets wrapped in condoms emerged. After that it was only a matter of time—evidence gathered put beyond doubt the involvement of the two."

But the case had not ended. During interrogation, Aubin let slip hints that took enforcement officials to the man operating one of the biggest narcotic rings in Bombay. Aubin's statement that: "The heroin is very good quality because it comes from the biggest dealer in Bombay," alerted officials about the possibility of netting a larger catch. One person questioned as a result was Sam Gurbux Bhiryani who on July 27 appeared before Malik but evidence linking him to trafficking in narcotics was still to be established. He was released on bail of Rs 25,000 and the court will reconvene in a month's time.

Like other drug runners before him, the golden goose and his accomplice will soon be able to wing their way out of the country. Their plea that the three-month detention in judicial custody along with an "adequate" fine be regarded as their having paid for their crimes has been accepted. Said Malik: "I am of the view that the imprisonment which they have already undergone and the imposition of a fine of Rs 12,500 each, is sufficient to meet the ends of justice."

Stricter Laws: Within the purview of the law, Malik could not have done better. But an enforcement officer complains: "What we should have are stricter laws for traffickers which would convict them for at least 15 years and heavy fines. All that happens today is that the convicted person is declared persona non grata."

The present system suits everybody, but the law enforcement agencies. The Government has given tacit approval as it prevents the over-crowding of Indian jails and ensures that the traffickers do not return to the country. It also suits narcotic dealers as it ensures nominal punishments in contrast to high profits if operations are successful. If Aubin had got away, his small cache which cost Rs 32,000 in India would have fetched Rs 3 lakh in Montreal. Aubin's case has proved once again that India continues to be one of the happier hunting grounds for drug peddlers.

—ASOKA RAINA

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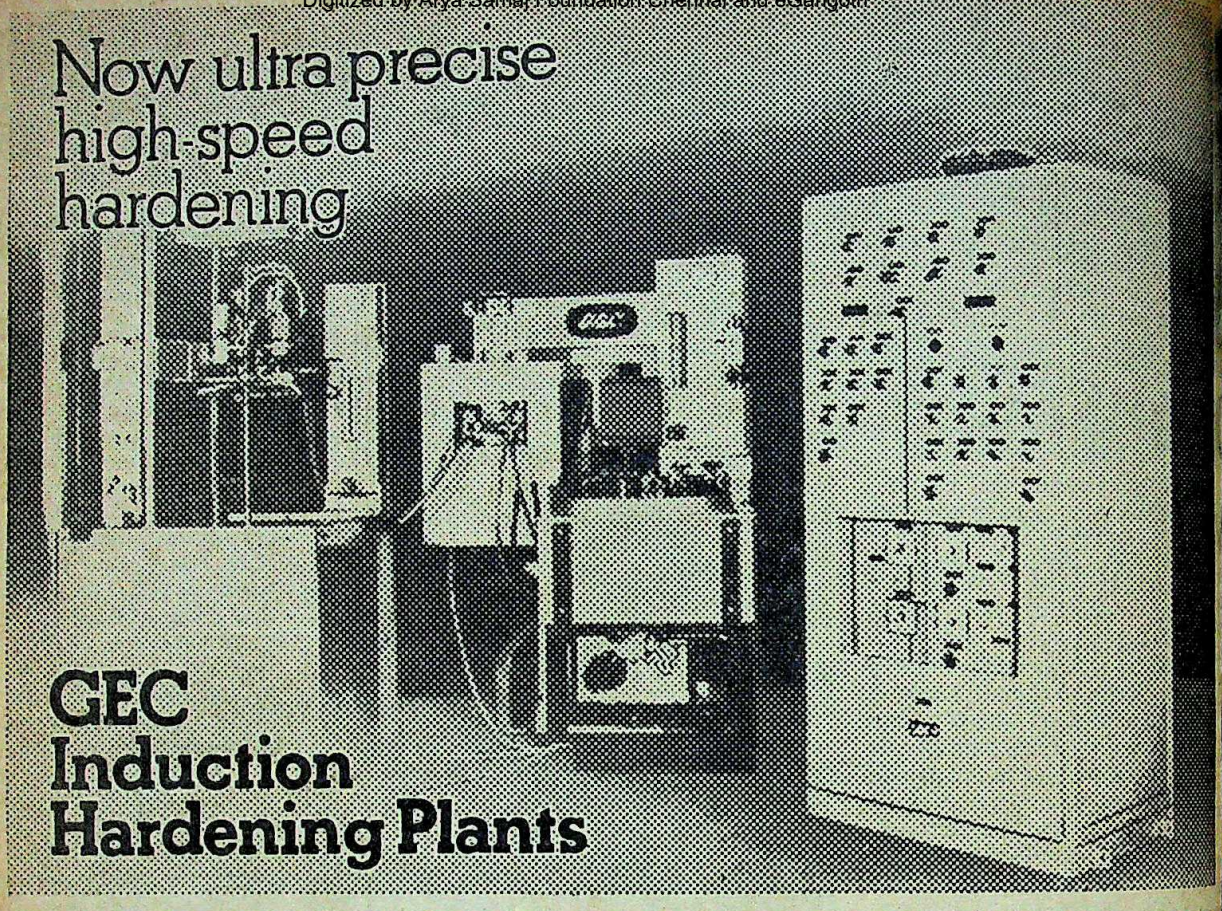

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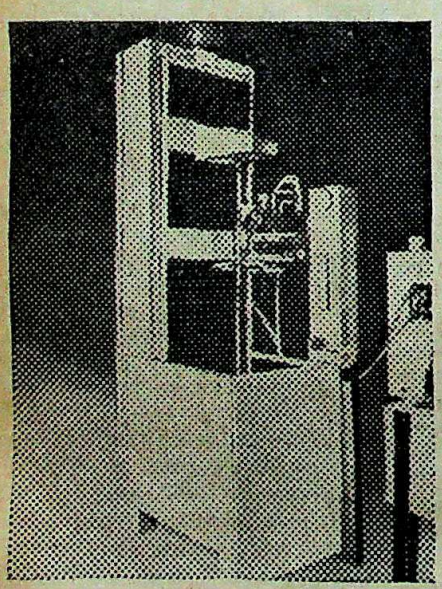

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Vankar (second from right) and friends

Open Sesame

MULJI Vankar, 16, a hungry slum dweller of Ahmedabad, broke into a vacant house and stealthily entered the cellar. Rummaging through the tins in the darkness, he soon realised that he had stumbled upon a treasure. For the tins contained not the expected biscuits, but wads of 100-rupee currency notes. Finding it impossible to take all of the treasure with him, he decamped with a few wads. Thereafter, he replenished himself regularly.

The secret of Mulji's new-found affluence would never have leaked out had it not been for his eagerness to show it off. Since he was laying his hands on lakhs of rupees, he did not mind distributing a few thousands to his friends. The word spread, and even those elders who asked him to spare them some were not disappointed.

Slip-up: On a sunny afternoon last month, Rajesh Keshavlal, 11, who stays in the same Sukhipura slum and had been given Rs 3,600 by Mulji, grandly distributed the money among his class-mates at school. His father, Arvinda Pranjeevan, a witness to his generosity and intrigued by his unexpected affluence, asked him for an explanation. And the police was called.

A nervous Keshavlal told the investigating officer, Sub-Inspector Chandansingh Chauhan, 42, of his fortunate friend Mulji's windfall. Dashing off to the treasure trove, the officer caught Mulji just as he emerged from the house with a pillow cover filled with Rs 4,80,000. Arrested on the spot, Mulji confessed and named 12 others. Soon after, a few surprised residents of Sukhipura reluctantly parted company with their fortunes as the law moved in. As policemen watched in amazement, wads of currency notes emerged. Money piled up in front till a grand total of Rs 7,82,410 was reached, a dozen arrests were made. A resident, Kama Chavda, 25, confessed that he had sent Rs 40,000 given him by Mulji to his relations in Venkaner, as he did not think the money would be safe in his shack. Police proceeded to the village and recovered all of it.

Untrustworthy: Interestingly, the money kept in biscuit tins ostensibly belonged to the Chatrabhuj Lajpatrai Trust. The manager of the trust, Mohanlal Aggarwal, a mill owner, told the police that only Rs 7.5 lakh was kept in the cellar. But the fact that the police have recovered more than that amount, and that Mulji was caught with Rs 4.8 lakh, have led the police to believe that there must have been over Rs 25 lakh stacked in the house. The amount recovered from Mulji and his associates after their month-long spending spree was more than that quoted by Aggarwal.

During interrogations, Aggarwal gave away nothing. Though he said there were six other trustees he was not able to name them. He said no accounts were kept as the money comprised secret donations but could not explain why it was not deposited in a bank. Said a top police official: "We cannot exactly determine how much money was kept in the house as money was being regularly siphoned off by Mulji. Obviously, this seems to be black money." To give the plot an added twist, the police have failed to search Aggarwal's home; they say that he objected because the "purdah system" prevailed in his household, which raises the question why women police could not be employed for the operation. Income tax authorities have confirmed that the money is unaccounted for.

Life-style: Mulji could not say how many lakhs of rupees he had spirited away. Said he: "I wanted to remove as much money as I could and then buy some land in Rajkot." (At the time of his arrest only Rs 1.6 lakh remained in the house.) Though his plans were rudely cut short, his life-style and that of his friends had taken on a new lustre while the sun shone for them. They bought new clothes and visited costly restaurants.

An income tax official even paid the youngsters a compliment. "The children may have committed a crime," said he, "but they should be rewarded for accidentally bringing so much of unaccounted money into the limelight." Be that as it may, for the disillusioned dozen at least, some of the *sukh* (comfort) has certainly gone out of Sukhipura.

—RAMESH MENON

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SOVIET UNION

Promise Of A Rose Garden

SUMMER is the season of white midnights in Moscow. The twilight lingers even as the clock in the Kremlin chimes the zero hour. Muscovites, too, linger in hotels, restaurants and countless public places, talking and sipping thick black turkish coffee or vodka. One white midnight in July, the posh International Hotel on the left bank of the Moscova river, from where the towers of the Kremlin seem to be deceptively near, was still agog with activity. At Moscow's only Japanese restaurant located in this hotel, kimono-clad Russian girls were fluttering around to serve six business men from Japan.

One of them, Nikomoto Tanaka, agreed to be "briefly" interviewed by a visiting Indian. He had been coming every year to the Soviet Union as his firm, like over 2,000 others in Japan, was "doing business" in Siberia. Asked how he found the health of the Soviet system, Tanaka dusted off a pinhead spot on his neatly pressed tie and observed: "I have been coming to Moscow every year since 1973. Each time, I notice some improvement in the Soviet life-style."

Tanaka's observation was confirmed the following morning by Anthony Lewis of *The New York Times*, who was on a look-and-see trip to the Soviet Union on behalf of his paper. "The Soviet economy is in poor shape," Lewis said over breakfast at the Express Restaurant in International Hotel. "But it is not as bad as some of us would like to believe. The Russians are making more things and making them better."

Drawbacks: The Soviet state, land of 'advanced socialism', is not at its best at the age of 65. It is beset with problems. The economy is down, keeping up only a modest growth from 5.2 per cent in 1976 to 3.2 per cent in 1981. Cruel weather has seriously damaged agriculture for the fourth successive year, leaving a deficit of perhaps 40 million tons of grain, mostly animal feed. Productivity is increasing only at a snail's pace, perhaps at 1 per cent per annum. There is a hurting shortage of skilled labour, especially for projects in Siberia. The process of accelerated development in the '70s has created distortions in the economy. A skilled worker now earns much more than the director of a research institute or a senior official of an economics ministry.

The economy is demanding major structural changes—a loosening of the central grip and transfer of decision-making power to the local units, urban as well as rural, being the most pressing requirement. The Russian—like the Indian—is not a workaholic, nor the world's best performer. Inefficiencies and waste hit the eyes of even the most casual observer of the Soviet scene. Particularly stunning is the amount of food the Soviets waste. The explanation heard most often is that the Russian won't change his food habits, which are ostentatious and wasteful.

There are numerous anomalies which Soviet experts euphemistically call "incongruities." Prices have not been raised for most items since the '50s! Soviet wages are deceptively low, and do not therefore indicate how people live. Everything except non-essential luxury items is heavily subsidised. Bread is supplied free at public eating places. Much of this welfareism has become uneconomic, illogical. The average Soviet citizen can now very well pay more for transport, food, education and leisure. But, as an economist explained, "What is economically illogical cannot always be economically modified or corrected. Because modification is not socially acceptable."

Confidence: Those who claim that the Soviet economy is bankrupt are, however, grossly wrong. The Germans do not think so, though many Americans do. Soviet economists are confident that, given peace, the managerial and technological problems of the economy will be resolved during this decade. "The US can stop some of our large projects, like the Siberian gas pipeline project. But the Americans cannot stop them. We shall build the pipeline and all other Siberian projects under way, whatever the US or others may do," was a typical remark among Soviet economists.

Among the people too there is stubborn optimism. The people have faith in the system's stability, and its capacity to bring about further improvement in the living condition of the Soviet people, is in sharp contrast with what one comes across in the capitalist and developing countries. To say that there is no political discontent in the USSR beyond an insignificantly tiny fringe of the metropolitan population is not saying enough: the revolution is loved and esteemed by the generations born after the Second World War, even if it is not worshipped by them.

There is no consumerism in the Soviet Union in the Western sense of the term. The Soviet state has been allocating increasing resources to meet the demands of steadily improving living standards. At the same time, the party maintains a firm grip on the pattern and extent of consumer satisfaction.

And for good reason. In the short span of 65 years, the Soviet state has developed from a semi-industrialised society to the world's second economic power, and the benefits of growth have been more equally-distributed than in any other society, including the socialist states of Central Europe. Azerbaizan, one of the Asiatic republics, and Armenia, another non-Russian republic, were both feudal societies when they joined the USSR in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution. Now they are among the most industrialised republics of the Soviet Union. Azerbaizan is famous for its off-shore oil installations—at which 700 women work as laboratory scientists—and its nuclear power plant (the first in south-western USSR). Armenia, sadly enough, is now the national home of one of the most persecuted and talented ethnic nationalities in human history.

Better Off: The Soviet shops look forlorn and empty when compared with the bulging market affluence of America and Western Europe. There are the famous (or notorious) lines of middle-class women buying whatever is available. But go to any Soviet home and you see the refrigerators are packed with food, some of which is thrown away because there are no beggars, no hungry people, no women rummaging in garbage cans for a castaway chicken bone or half a loaf of bread, as you see in New York. People are not only well dressed, but fashionably dressed too. There are more mink coats on women in Moscow than in any other large world capital.

The Soviet citizen still does not eat as much animal protein as does a West German, but probably will in the coming decade. Nor does he has more money than he can spend. He does not have to wait for more than two years to get a state or cooperative-built apartment

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which he pays only nominal rent. If he wants to buy a private car, he and his spouse can save the money (around Rs 78,000 for a smart, fuel-efficient small Lada) in three years. Ten percent of Soviet families already possess private automobiles. A million cars are available each year for private purchase.

Self-respect: Pasha Sadychov, 24, is an Azerbaizani studying at Moscow's Institute of Oriental Studies. "My parents are both economists in Baku. They became orphans when they were in their teens. I am proud to be an Azerbaizani as well as a Soviet citizen," he said in excellent Bengali, a language he elected to learn "because I wanted to read Rabindranath Tagore in the original". Pasha and his entire generation seem to have been solidly integrated into the Soviet system which has managed (if 'solved' is an overstatement) the ethnic nationality problem in a manner Indians can envy. "For me nothing is more important than the Revolution and the Soviet state," affirmed Pasha with palpable pride. "We are what we are today only because of the Revolution."

There is no consumerism in the Soviet Union in the Western sense of the term. The Soviet state has been allocating increasing resources to meet the demands of steadily improving living standards. At the same time, the Party maintains a firm grip on the pattern and extent of consumer satisfaction. A number of Soviet citizens, asked how they would react if they suddenly faced a reverse trend in consumerism and found that their living standards had stopped moving up or were falling, gave ambiguous answers. "If the leaders are compelled to cut down consumerism because of a threat to the security of the Soviet state, we shall certainly bear with it," said one reflecting the official view.

"It can't be done. It's against the law." This is the refrain of Russians talking about their rights and privileges. Socialist legalism is part of the contemporary Soviet political culture; the arbitrariness of the Stalin era is only a memory, best forgotten. The Soviet citizen is free to move about in his country. He can change jobs and choose his career. Several foreign service officials have recently resigned to take up research or teaching jobs. "Do you know why some of our services are poor?" asked a sociologist in Moscow, and volunteered the answer. "Because the Revolution has made everyone intrinsically equal and no one enjoys working as a porter or waiter. Many of them study in the evening and climb up the social ladder." Economic disparities and social inequalities do exist in the USSR; they stare the visitor in the face. But among the Soviet people, high and lowly you do not notice any sign of deference to the rich and the powerful—certainly no cringing submissiveness.

A Soviet family at tea: steadily improving living standards

OF COURSE there is a generation gap between us and our parents," said Tania, 24, a bibliographer in Moscow. "Our tastes in music and dress are different from theirs. But if you are looking for a political generation gap, you won't find it. The gap here is social and cultural." But even there, the generational gap is much narrower than in the western countries. For instance, young men and women do not 'shack up' in the Soviet cities. There is a lot of pre-marital sex, but not as much as in the capitalist West.

Indeed, the marrying age in the USSR is strikingly low—18 to 21, generally. Evidently, young people get married primarily for sex. Hence the high rate of divorce; nearly one out of three marriages break up. The Soviet state is now trying to strengthen the family system, partly because of the zero birth rate. Women are being urged to stay home to bring up their young ones. They are being steadily shifted from hard jobs to those which are largely automated. Maternity benefits in the Soviet Union are incredibly generous, and now looking after children is being regarded as socially productive work for which mothers will soon be paid job compensatory wages.

All in all, the Soviet system hasn't delivered a rose garden to its 250 million people (which system has?), but it has built a fully industrialised society larded with the most extended welfarism to be noticed anywhere in the world. Its economy generates wealth valued by Americans at $1.5 trillion a year, which is two-thirds of the gross domestic product of the US. Its purposefully cultivated and carefully protected self-sufficiency makes it virtually independent of, and certainly isolated from, the world capitalist economy. With Western Europe, the Soviets have been able to build a relationship that is now as much to the advantage of the capitalist countries as it is to the USSR. Soviet exports to the West rose 35 per cent in the first three months of 1981 over the comparable period of 1980.

In 1981 the Soviets earned $28 billion by exporting mineral resources, timber, energy and arms to the non-socialist countries. Moscow has to pay about $8 billion on grain imports each year. This amount the Soviets expect to earn from gas exports to Western Europe once the Siberian pipeline comes on stream in January 1984. Furthermore, Soviet farmers produce enough food even in a bad crop year to feed the population. The two weakest points in the Soviet system are the lags in agriculture and technology. The Soviets have enough resources to buy both from the capitalist world to make up.

Firm Foundations: If the economy is far stronger than some American sovietologists seem to believe, the political foundations of the Soviet system are stronger still. There is no political discontent in the USSR that could cause the powerful politbureau to sit up, nor is there likely to be any. The nationality seam is firm and stable. The demographic changes now in trend could create political problems only in the second or third decade of the next century, thus allowing time to the leadership to design solutions.

Indeed, religion seems to be more alive and well in Christian Armenia than in Muslim Azerbaizan. The great bulk of Soviet troops deployed in Afghanistan continue to be drawn from the neighbouring Asiatic republics. The Orthodox Armenian church is now the national symbol of all Armenians in the world. Half the population of Armenia go to church to pray, according to the head of the Church, in whose library one can find volumes on the Armenian population in Calcutta and Bombay. Religion as a pursuit of human beings, individuals or groups, and deprived of political power, has blended with Marxism-Leninism in the USSR.

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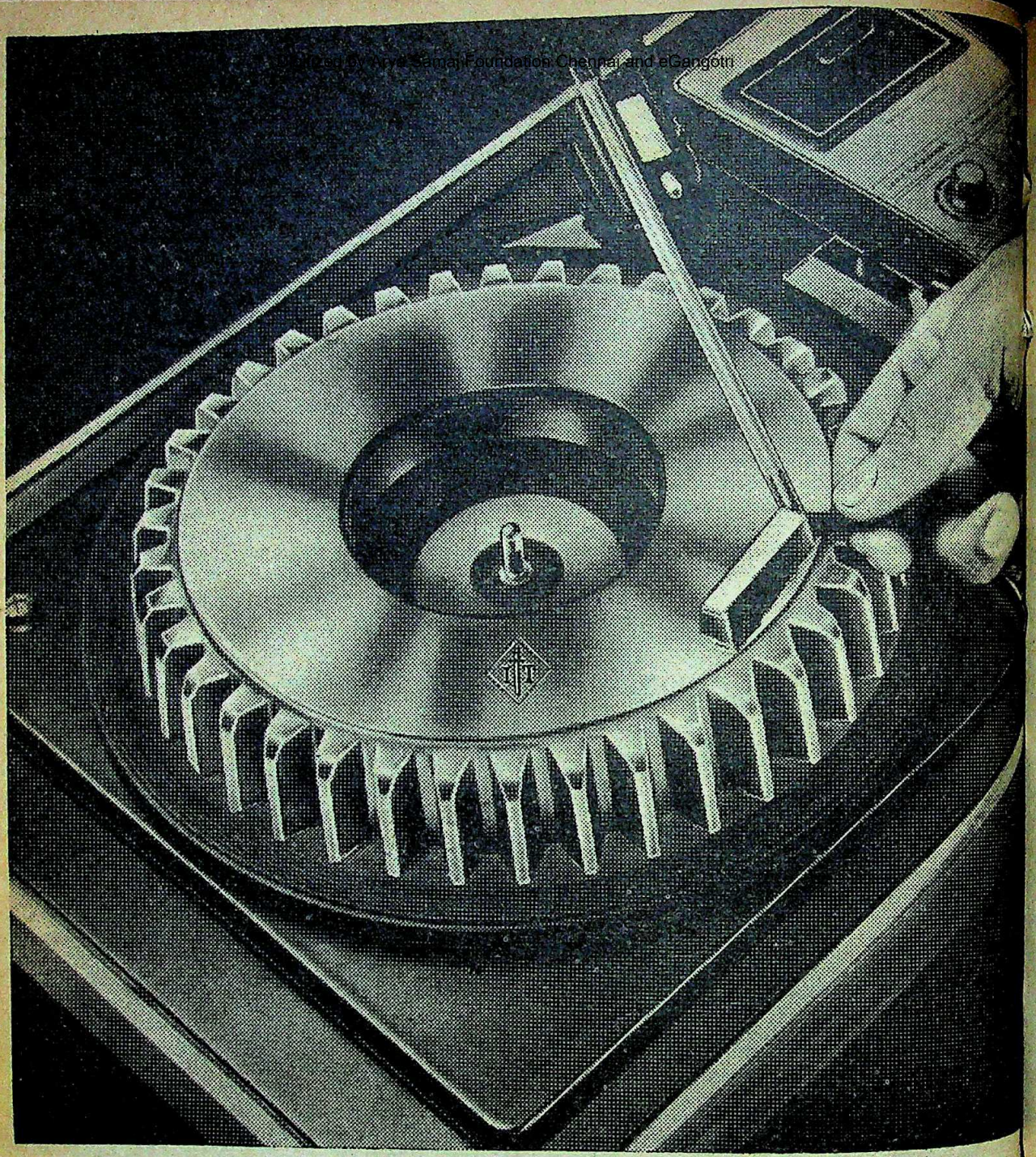

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FRANCE

A Touch Of Class

IT IS the decade's most audacious and electrifying robbery in Europe, a Mexican millionaire couple were looted of their dazzling collection of jewellery estimated at $5 million (Rs 4.5 crore) last October from one of Paris's most elegant addresses, the Ritz Hotel. The jewellery included a 44-carat diamond ring worth $2.5 million (Rs 2.25 crore), a 6.65-carat pendant, a diamond-studded gold necklace, earrings and a gold watch. Last month, after nine months of painstaking investigations, in a dramatic culmination, French and Swiss police detectives arrested three persons in Geneva and a fourth in Paris. The brains behind the spectacular theft were allegedly a French baron and an American baroness. The baroness was none other than 46-year-old Stefania von Kories zu Goetzen who had created an uproar at the Oberoi intercontinental Hotel in New Delhi in January this year over allegedly missing diamond earrings worth Rs 8 lakh (INDIA TODAY, February 15).

The arrest of the baroness and her confidant Baron Hubert Augier de Moussac, 48, left the New York-Paris-Geneva-Gstaad-Monte Carlo jet set breathless. After all, it is not often that a blue-blooded, upper crust couple is accused of attempting a daring robbery and end up being caught to be revealed as a distinctly ungenteel and predatory pair.

It was on October 7 last year that the hijinks began at the Ritz. A classy hotel, the Ritz is also a few yards away from the French Ministry of Justice at the Place Vendome, where many distinguished jewellers have set up shops. Two nattily-dressed young men strode confidently into the lush interior of the Ritz and took the ancient elevator to Suite 242—at $500 (Rs 4,500) per night, 'breakfast non-inclusive'—of the Mexican Croesus, Hugo Salinas y Rochas. The 64-year-old Mexican land baron is reputed for his immense wealth and also for his desire to see his wife Maria Isabela, gleam and shimmer, bedecked in priceless gems, at various chic night-clubs and parties.

Heavy Haul: After politely knocking at the door to gain admittance, the two, once inside, whipped out a Colt .45 and a .38. In a few minutes, the couple were bound and gagged to their beds as the young men swiftly ransacked the dressing tables and drawers. They came up with a glittering armful of torques, brooches, necklaces, wristlets lockets, rings and chains. This coruscating boodle included the lustrous ring, almost too heavy for a human hand. According to one jeweller, its gloss and sheen can "blind the human eye" and there are only two other such rings in existence—one with the Ford family in the US and the other with Emir Abdullah of Qatar. Apparently, the ring was not insured since no insurance company was "willing to take the risk". In retrospect it seems such a wise decision. The ring was

The baron and baroness at the 'L' Apocalypse': blue-blooded suspects

valued at $3 million (Rs 2.7 crore).

The two men vanished without a trace leaving virtually no clues. Crack French detectives launched arduous investigations. After nine months of investigations, a small classified advertisement appeared in *Le Figaro*, a newspaper favoured by the wealthy in France, which promised a $300,000 (Rs 27 lakh) reward to anyone who could send the fabulous ring back to the Mexican couple—if need be through an intermediary—and "absolutely no questions would be asked". It was not long before the Mexican millionaire was asked to set up a rendezvous at the headquarters of a Swiss bank in Geneva, Société des Banques Suisses. The deal was the return of the ring against the $300,000 reward and questions asked whatsoever".

This set the Franco-Swiss network to meticulously plan an operation. Last fortnight, the rendezvous took place in the padded vault of the bank's headquarters in Geneva between three people who would return the ring and two representatives of the Mexican couple. One of the three was Baroness Stefania von Kories. The cheque for $300,000 passed from the representatives of the Mexicans into the elegantly gloved hand of the baroness. She couldn't have enjoyed it for more than a couple of minutes when the two representatives—French and Swiss detectives in disguise—whipped out police and handcuffs.

Aristocratic Suspects: The ring was recovered along with $500,000 (Rs 45 lakh) in cash, perhaps from the sale of the booty. Brushing aside her shrill claims to innocence, the baroness was arrested along with her two accomplices—both Frenchmen: Raymond Davy, 22, joint owner of an automobile firm, and Bruno Lovisone, 20, a broker for luxury cars. It didn't take long for the police to nab the other 'brain' in the intriguing plot: Baron Hubert Augier de Moussac who lives in Paris's exclusive Avenue Foch—one of the 12 arteries leading to the famous Arc de Triomphe and the Champs-Elysees. The aristocrat was furious at being awakened rudely by police next morning.

As yet, few details are available concerning either the baroness or the baron. The more supercilious among fashion magazines devoted to high chic seem more concerned that the derring-do of the couple could affect the 'mystique' of baronetcy to drag through the mire the reputations of grandees in the social registry. While police sources say they are confident that they will have the case sewn up soon and that there won't be any more of this affair, "romantic mystery" attached either to the baroness or to her friend.

Apart from being described as an American socialite with an Asian background, nothing else is divulged forthcoming regarding the baroness. They have detained her in Geneva for almost a month of intensive grilling. They have released no further details of the case at the moment since they want nothing untoward to happen which might ruin their chances of casting a wider net—if an international network is involved as is being speculated. They are still unsure if Davy and Lovisone were actually those who had trussed up the Mexican couple and decamped with the jewels. They are also evaluating if the stolen jewels can quickly be traced and whether any of the jewels are perhaps in India where the baroness had caused a rumpus about "her missing jewels".

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WHILE applying for a visa to India last December, the baroness had reported she possessed three passports—American, German and French. Her nationality was listed as American and her place of birth as 6-7-1936. She claimed she was divorced and the only name that she gave as local reference was none other than that of Baron de Moussac.

No one seems to know what she does for living or other personal details. But it appears that she has a passion for jewels and has never missed a single party or reception hosted by jewellers. She and Baron de Moussac were most recently spotted at an exclusive night-club, 'L'Apocalypse' on the fashionable Right Bank for a champagne and caviar party on the occasion of the 70th birthday of American jazz musician Lionel Hampton. There the baroness rubbed shoulders with the likes of Dewi Soekarno, Princess Soraya, the Countess of Serigny and others.

Swank Life-style: If reports are to be believed, this buccaneering couple of lofty nobility were impoverished, and down-at-heel. According to one police source, one of their principal tasks would be to find out how the couple could afford their ostentatious life-style with no verifiable source of income. Both lived in fashionable style. Both had elegant, well-feathered residences and swank limousines.

The baron has a thoroughbred pedigree: he hails from a noble family of Bordeaux. He hardly resembles a malevolent, modern-day Mephistopheles. Despite his ducal bearing and patrician manner, he is reported to be obsessed with his fitness and trim physique. One young jeweller, who apparently shared a dinner table with him at a high society party recounted this experience: "At a table for six, the baron was surrounded by three curvaceous bronzed beauties. He was absolutely devastating, telling them he could read fortunes from their eyes and palms, holding their hands, whispering, and that left the poor girls melting and quivering."

The reaction of the baron's neighbours at his *pied-á-térre* in Avenue Foch was less gushing. Although the couple found it hard to believe that the refined and courteous gentleman could be a "mastermind of international jewel thiefs", they felt if the baron was proven guilty, he should be shown no leniency because of his blood-stock.

The concierge at the baroness's Rue de la Université apartment, which lies in a quiet quarter not far away from Napoleon's tomb and the French Foreign Ministry on the Quai d'Orsay, seemed stunned. Said she: "I knew Madame for 12 years. Every day, the baron came to see her whenever she was in Paris. He was hardly discreet. He parked his big limousine in the courtyard, sometimes to the annoyance of the other tenants. But I think she was poor and did not have enough money because once she could not pay her electricity bills and it was cut off. She lived for a whole week with candles. I couldn't live for a day without electricity and I don't know how the poor dear managed."

Name-dropping: The mystery of the "poor dear" will be unravelled in due time. But that she can be argumentative and even saucy is apparent. When she returned from India in April this year, the baroness heard from her sources that INDIA TODAY had been making persistent enquiries at her residence in an effort to know more about her background following the capers at the Oberoi Intercontinental. She twice rang up officers at the Indian Embassy in Paris, asking them what the enquiries were for and not so subtly dropped names all over the place. She told one of them: "I know President Mitterrand. I even know Giscard (the former President). In fact I'm having dinner with them." She stubbornly refused to meet the press and quietly vanished from Paris before making her spectacular splash at the Hampton party at the 'L'Apocalypse'.

As the police rapidly closed in on this explosive case—which could land Baroness Stefania von Kories in jail for 15 years if found guilty—and the titled celebrity circuit reeled under the shock of her arrest, the more compelling question was raised by the concierge: "I know she had problems. But she still had all those beautiful evening gowns, a car, an apartment and a man who looked very *distingué*. Why did she then have to organise this horrible crime? Tell me, if the rich—and that too the nobility—begin to steal, what will the poor do?"

—RAMESH CHANDRAN

LAW

Home Grounds

THE SENSATIONAL arrest of the baroness in Geneva will no doubt warm the cockles of the hearts of a few people in New Delhi, among them police officers and the management of the Hotel Oberoi Intercontinental. On January 7 this year, the baroness had complained to the police that her jewels had been stolen from the locker of the hotel. Such a complaint greeted with considerable scepticism by the police and the management. The hotel's security chief, S.N. Dey, had said he "smelt a rat".

The baroness's involvement in the Paris Ritz robbery nine months ago has, to an extent, vindicated their stand. Said A.S.A. Michigan, director of the hotel's security: "We had no doubts earlier. This happening only confirms our belief. We are absolutely happy over the event."

The police, however, weren't smiling. Said one officer: "We are now wondering why Interpol had not come up with anything when we asked them about her background. Had they done so the complexion of the case would have been different." Last fortnight, the Crime Branch had closed the case for lack of evidence, but is now toying with the idea of reopening the case.

Fresh Openings: Deputy Commissioner of Police R.S. Sahaye sums up the police's earlier efforts: "We had looked at three possibilities. One, a theft had really taken place. Two, the baroness had lost the jewels and wanted to claim insurance. Three, the jewels had been sold and the theft was only a red herring. All possible avenues had been examined but no clues had surfaced." Sahaye says now that "untraced cases can always be reopened as and when any evidence is forthcoming".

Much would depend on what the Swiss and the French police come up with. The Central Bureau of Investigation's Interpol wing has been asked to request Interpol in Paris to provide them with all available information on the baroness and her alleged accomplices. The police are also considering sending separate requests to the Swiss and the French police. This could, the police feel, throw some light on what really happened at the Oberoi in January.

Another Indian authority, the Customs, is in a bit of a quandary. It is still holding on to Rs 26 lakh worth of jewels which the baroness had left behind as security before leaving India. The customs could have auctioned these to recover the duty the baroness owes. Now there is a fresh hitch, says a Customs official: We have to make sure the jewels belong to her before we can sell them. Should they be stolen, a totally new ball game will begin."

If the jewels turn out to have been stolen, the baroness will have more headaches. Says Dey: "The happenings in Delhi would then be part of a conspiracy and she can be hauled up for having lodged a false report, punishable under the law." But that would mean extraditing the baroness to India, and she will be a most reluctant guest.

—ASOKA RAINA

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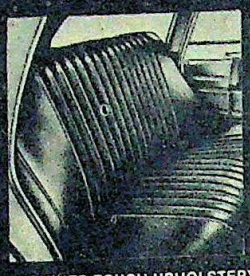

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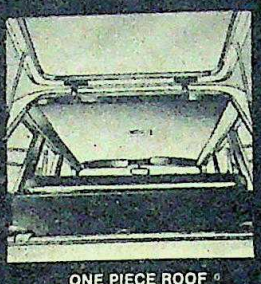

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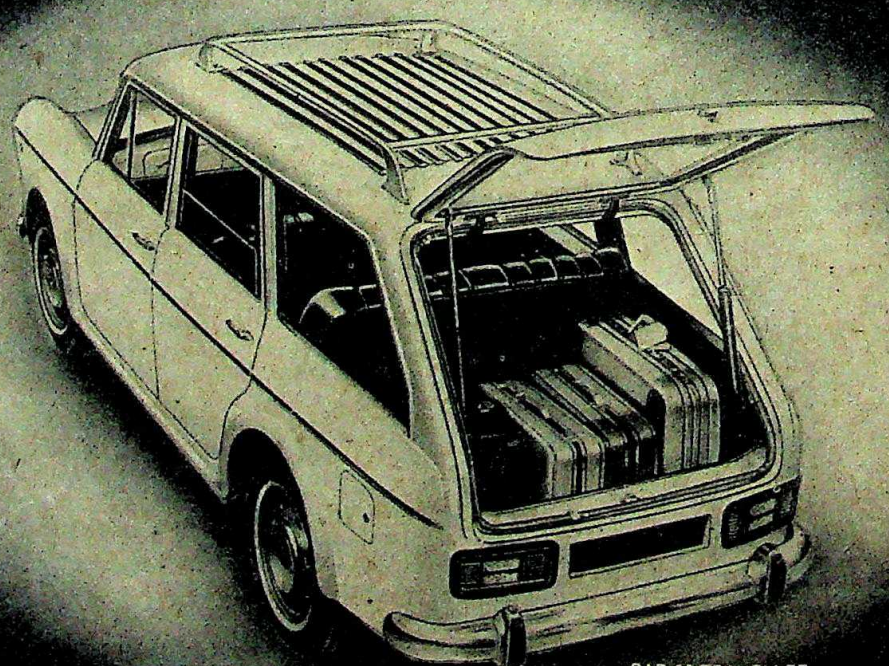

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Turban Trouble

FOR THE 25,000-strong Sikh community in Britain it was a day of outrage and resentment. On July 31 last, Lord Denning, 82, one of the most eminent judges in England, delivered a valedictory judgement in the Court of Appeal, in relation to a case lodged by the Commission of Racial Equality (CRE), deciding that Sikhs were not an ethnic group and therefore were not covered by the 1976 Race Relations Act.

The case which came up for hearing at the Court was appealed by S.S. Mandla, through the CRE. Mandla, a solicitor resident in Birmingham, applied at a local private school in 1980 to get his son Gurinder, 17, admitted there. But the headmaster of the school, which has strict rules about uniforms for its pupils, refused him admission, unless he cut his hair short and discarded his turban. Gurinder's parents, refusing to comply with the rules, went straight to the CRE, a government-sponsored body, part of whose work it is to monitor and pursue cases of racial discrimination.

The Mandlas' first hurdle came when the Birmingham County Court found that the headmaster of Park Grove School, where Gurinder was seeking admission, had not discriminated against him. The case was then moved over to the Court of Appeal by the CRE, where Denning, along with two other Justices of Appeal delivered a unanimous ruling that the school had in no way violated the Race Relations Act. The judges also delivered a strong attack on the CRE, criticised for its near ineffectualness, for having a *cause celebre* of this case, emphasising that under the Act Sikhs did not constitute a 'race' but were a religious group with highly developed political and social overtones among its adherents".

Clear Definition: Section 3 of the Act defines "racial grounds" as "colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins". Within these precisely worded definitions, it is argued that the question of religion, politics or culture have been excluded, and it was largely on this aspect that Lord Denning and his associates based their decisions. The judges' decision that Sikhs were a religious and not a racial group sealed the fate of the petitioner. The decision was tough for the Court to exonerate the headmaster, and further add that there was no discrimination whatsoever on his part. The ruling has worried many Sikh leaders in Britain, who feel that it is bound to open doors for further discrimination against the Sikh community for their religious observances.

The burgeoning Sikh population of Britain has been one of the success stories of immigrant communities, enjoying certain privileges in the field of employment and schooling and in the wearing of turbans. Recently a Sikh bus driver won the right to wear his turban instead of the customary transport cap. The Motor Cycle Crash Helmets Act has a special religious exemption clause which allows the Sikhs to wear turbans without the crash helmet while driving a motor cycle. In a recent test case a young trainee nurse also won the right to wear a *salwar kameez* instead of the skirt as her religion forbade the showing of her legs. Airlines have also long accepted Sikhs carrying a small *kirpan*.

A Sikh schoolboy in Birmingham: crucial judgment

Concerned: However, British employers are not the most liberal minded in terms of employees' religious needs. Thus few employers allow Muslim workers to take Friday off or allow them time for prayers during the day. Meanwhile, Sikh community leaders and gurudwaras have held meetings to decide what should be done for the protection of Britain's Sikhs. Said Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan, president of the International Council of Sikhs and Khalistan agitator: "We are very concerned. We have formed a council of lawyers and will discuss ways of taking the issue to a higher court." However, the Appeals Court judges refused permission for the matter to be taken to the House of Lords. Said an agitated Chauhan: "We are going to fight for changes to be made in the Race Relations Act, to include religious discrimination. We want amendments to be made to include Sikhs as a separate nation as well as a religious and ethnic group. The British press is sympathetic to our cause and now we must organise a lobby in Parliament to fight our case."

And while prominent Sikh leaders are readying themselves for a fresh assault, the Indian press back home has subtly denounced Lord Denning's declaration, at the same time upholding Mandla's ill-advised filing of the petition. An editorial comment on the case in *The Hindustan Times*, noted: "It seems that in filing a case on the basis of discrimination the focus has been shifted to a wrong aspect of the case. Since it is well established that Sikhs do not form a separate race... it would be difficult to establish racial discrimination.... The judgment is likely to create needless complications in areas where there is now no dispute."

Disgraceful Verdict: Prakash Singh Maini, President of a London gurudwara maintains that the majority of the Sikh population in Britain are in service industries and only a handful have their own businesses. Says Maini: "This is a disgraceful verdict for the Sikh community. Our children have a right to wear their turban, our religion says we must wear it. Now the Appeal Court says we cannot go to the House of Lords, we must organise and take our case to the prime minister. We have protested in earlier cases where they have tried to stop us wearing turbans and we will protest in this one too."

Lawyer Sibghat Kadri believes that Denning deliberately read the law too literally. Says Kadri: "The White Paper preceding the Race Relations Act specifically stated that the Sikh turban was to be protected. The wording of the Race Relations clause on indirect discrimination was clearly stated by the ministers concerned to include religious discrimination." Kadri also points out that Mota Singh, a barrister and QC often sits in lord Denning's court and while other judges have to wear wigs, Singh wears his turban with pride.

Lord Denning, who saw himself as a 'Portia man' in the cause of justice, retired in July. No doubt the Asian community will have much cause to remember him in years to come

—BONNY MUKHERJEE

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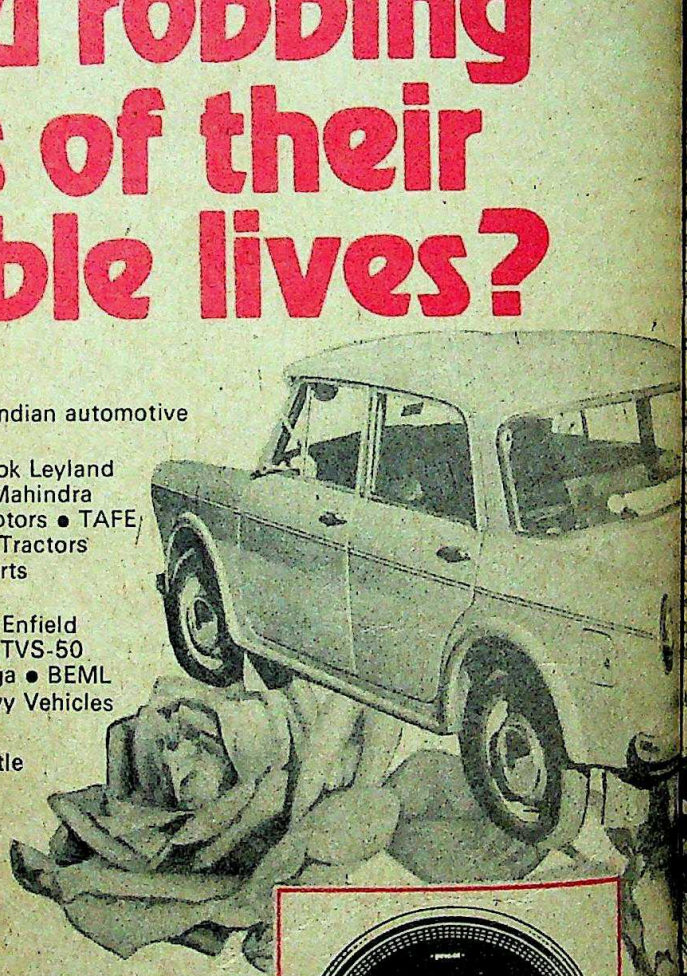

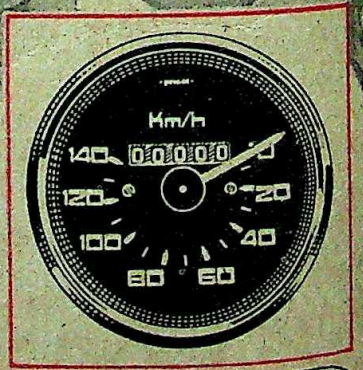

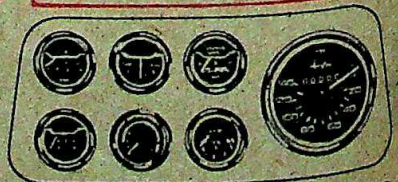

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BANGLADESH

The Long Wait

AT MIRPUR and Mohammadpur, the twin suburbs of Dacca, not very far away from the aristocratic diplomatic enclave of Gulshan, over a lakh men and women have spent their last 11 years in agonising suspense. They speak immaculate Bengali, but Bangladesh does not regard them as its citizens. Though most of them had never been to Pakistan, they fancy themselves as Pakistanis, a claim which Pakistan does not support. Mostly driven away from Bihar during waves of communal riots in the 1940s, these new 'boat people' of the Indian subcontinent are now waiting for only 5,000 of their compatriots to be carted away to Pakistan this month under the supervision of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with financial assistance from Saudi Arabia.

The evacuation, though on such a modest scale, is taking place—if at all—after years of dithering. Originally scheduled for March this year it was postponed as the Saudi government said it could not spare its aircraft during the weeks of *Ramadan* (the holy month of fast for Muslims). Saudi Arabia has finally agreed to place a C-130 transport aircraft at the disposal of the UNHCR, but the United Nations body now plans to move the human cargo in hired Boeing jets.

The refugees, referred often to their chagrin as 'Biharis', chose to side with the Pakistani dictator Yahya Khan's army during Bangladesh's blood-smeared liberation war in 1971. Originally estimated at 3.5 lakh, their number has now come down to 1.25 lakh following repatriation of 1.2 lakh of them and assimilation of the rest into the local population. Some of them have trickled into India evading border checks. Death and epidemic have also frequently stalked their shanty-town habitat, known ironically as the 'Geneva camp'.

Discrimination: Even though living in pathetic conditions, the refugees are persistently trying to go back 'home' to Pakistan. Nasim Khan, 60, a former employee of the Eastern Pakistan Railways (EPR), heads the Stranded Pakistani General Repatriation Committee (SPGRC). Says an anguished Khan, "Pakistan's treatment of her citizens is a cruel chapter unparalleled in human history. The tragedy lingers on as Pakistan refuses to accept us without valid reason."

According to the tripartite Delhi agreement among Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, in August 1973, Pakistan is supposed to take from Bangladesh a "substantial number of non-Bengalis", who have opted for citizenship of Pakistan with International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC). The basis of repatriation was later fixed on three categories—Central government employees (such as railways), divided families and hardship cases.

But Pakistan, it appears, never seriously thought of implementing the Delhi agreement. It was only interested in repatriation of its soldiers and civil servants. Says Khan, "As soon as those military men and civil servants were repatriated to Pakistan it started taking recourse to various tricks to make our repatriation impossible." Pakistan President Zia-ul-Haq, in an interview with the International Islamic News Agency in June, put the figure at 7,000. Five thousand of these under the 'hardship cases' category are being taken now.

Determined Efforts: The differences over the figure of Pakistanis to be repatriated is a result of Pakistan's reluctance to treat the railway employees of the then east Pakistan as the Central government employees. Pakistan is believed to be taking this position only to avoid taking back the remaining stranded Pakistanis. A bulk of the present three lakh stranded Pakistanis were the railway employees.

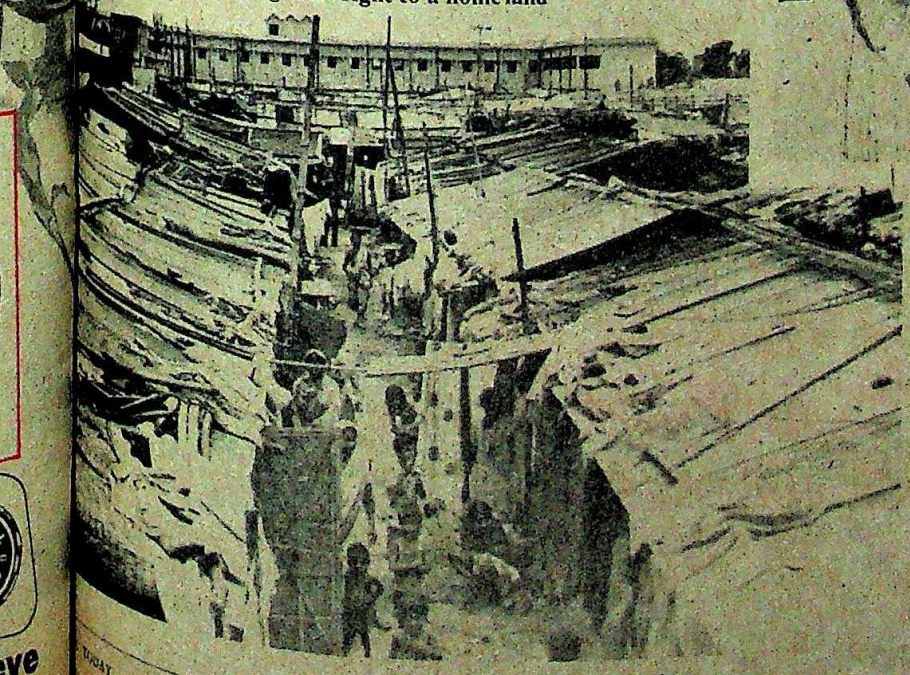
Notwithstanding the nonchalance of the Pakistan Government, the Bihari Muslims have been resorting to all means to pressurise Pakistan into accepting them. In March 1979, nearly 50,000 Biharis under Nasim Khan's leadership had assembled at Rangpur in northern Bangladesh to launch a long march to reach Pakistan through Indian territory. They were stopped by Bangladesh law enforcing agencies and Nasim Khan was arrested.

In another desperate bid they had threatened to go for self-immolation on August 14, 1981 but later abandoned the idea on the assurance from both Pakistan and Bangladesh governments that the matter would be favourably considered. Laments Khan: "We are trying our best to return to Pakistan but do not know how long we have to remain isolated from our kith and kin (who had been repatriated earlier)."

Khan's melancholy voice rings with uncertainty of a home and future. Unfortunately, he is not the only leader trying to secure a home for his people. War has always driven thousands out of the security of their homes into the cruel world of nomadism. It remains to be seen just how long the last of the Bihari Muslims will take to get to their 'homes'.

—IHSANUL KARIM in Dacca

Appalling conditions in a Dacca camp (below) and (inset) Nasim Khan: asserting their right to a home land



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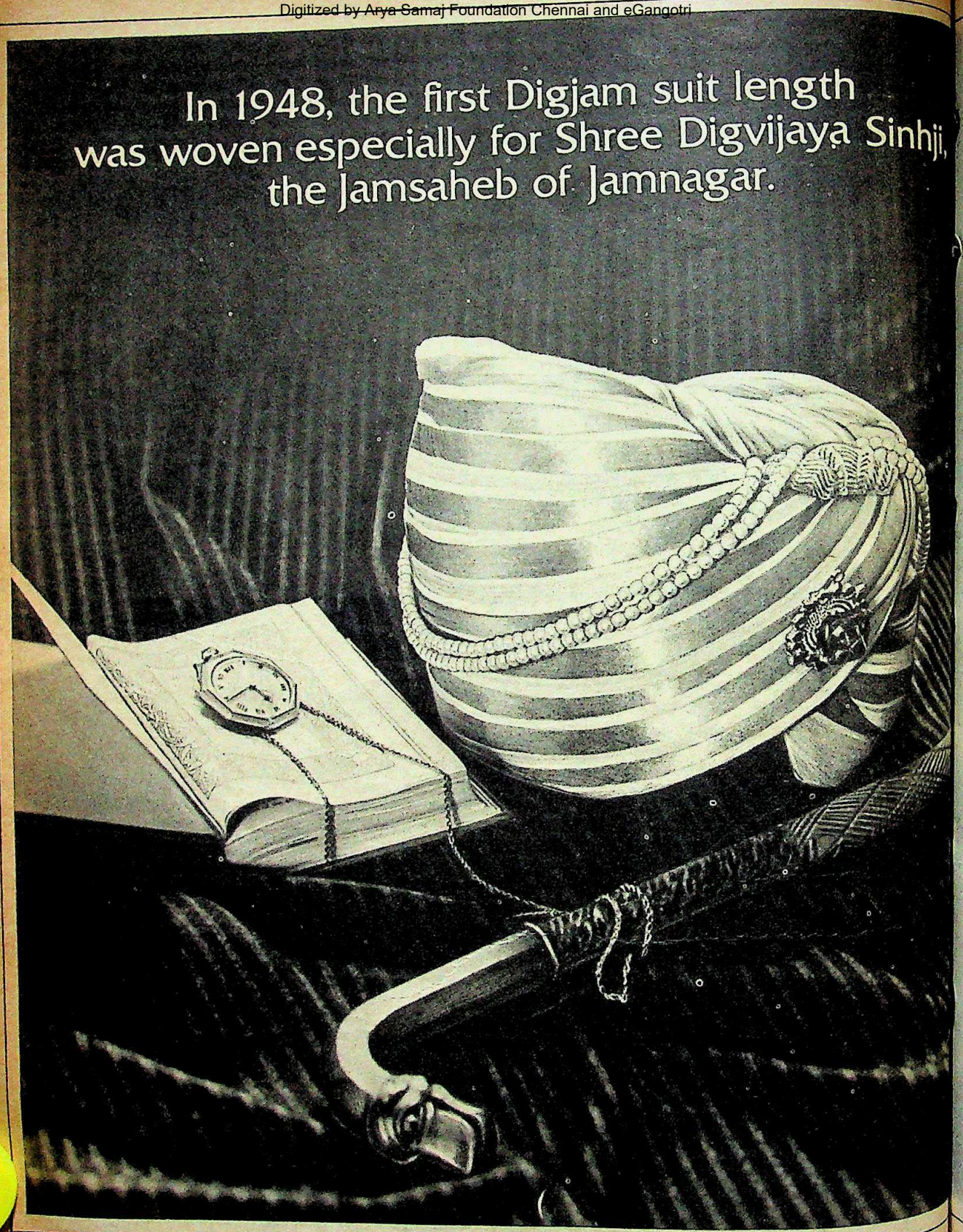

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AMITABH BACHCHAN

A Stricken Star

FOR MILLIONS of movie-goers, the scene was a familiar one. The tall, lanky frame of matinee idol Amitabh Bachchan draped over a hospital bed while white-coated figures hovered anxiously around. This time, however, there was a critical difference—no cameras panned from the shadows and the scene being played out in the intensive care unit (ICU) of Bombay's Breach Candy Hospital was tragically real. Bachchan, the near indestructible superstar who had battled seemingly insurmoutable odds in thousands of celluloid frames was now fighting the most epic and riveting battle of all—for his life.

Since July 27, when he underwent an emergency operation in Bangalore after an incident during shooting, Bachchan had hovered on the edge of the final precipice while a team of specialists battled to keep him alive. All across the country, millions of shell-shocked fans and the entire film industry held its collective breath while the star's heroic and lonely struggle was relayed daily onto the front pages of national newspapers. Childhood friend Rajiv Gandhi broke off his trip to the United States to fly back to Bombay to be at Bachchan's bedside. And among Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's first appointments after her return was a flying visit to see the stricken star.

But though the Gandhi visits were brief affairs, doctors have expressed concern at the constant visiting that has resulted in situations that can only be described as callous. Disregarding Bachchan's condition, his fellow-patients, and the strain on his family, groups of "concerned visitors" have barged in at all hours of the day to try and see the star. While fans were turned away, the problem with film personalities and celebrities is acute. When Rajiv arrived, almost half-a-dozen film personalities pushed their way into the ICU behind him. Finally Bachchan's wife Jaya, her eyes dark-rimmed from lack of sleep, was forced to physically hustle Bombay Mayor P.S. Pai, his family members, music director Kalyanji and a number of other people. But no sooner had they been pushed out, when a scuffle broke out outside the ICU as Janata Party member Babanrao Dh... tried to barge his way thr... with the help of his b... bodyguard. "This is abs... ridiculous and heartless," ... BPCC(I) chief Murli Deora ... had to push Dhakne out, ... are endangering the life o... man they claim to be pra... for."

Amitabh Bachchan on the sets of *Coolie*: fighting the odds

Well-wishers: The amou... flowers brought into the ho... was staggering. In the three v... hours each day, Bachchan's wife ... brother Ajitabh, and parents and sis... law were flooded with get-well card... flowers from well-wishers. The diver... his fan-following was proof of the ... overwhelming popularity: one m... last fortnight, Jaya Bachchan was ... roached on the second floor landing ... girl who had to be supported by a ... to walk. The young spastic handed ... card, stuttered out a prayer for Bach... and was helped out.

On another occasion Manm... Desai, who along with a number of ... producers including Yash Chopra, ... Johar and Prakash Mehra, kept a ... constant vigil outside the hospital doo... accosted by a 10-year-old dressed in ... Crying bitterly, the boy told Desai th... was willing to give up any part of his ... which could be used to save his hero... a close colleague of Desai's: "We hear ... kind of words in the films we make ... was unbelievably moving to hear th... cerity in that poor boy's voice."

Further afield, Bombay was s... with hoardings and posters praying ... superstar's recovery. In the city's ... get-well advertisements appeared re... and in temples like the city's famous ... Vinayak hugely attended prayer m... were held to invoke blessings for the ... One parent reported that his eight-y... fainted on the roadside when she he... misleading newspaper report that Be... had actually succumbed.

Widespread Feeling: Accord... producer-director Ramesh Sippy, ... rumour in Singapore last fortnight ... closure of almost every shop owned ... substantial Indian community there ... could not have happened for any ... in the history of Indian cinema," say... "The kind of emotions that Am... evoked among Indians across the ... absolutely phenomenal."

Small wonder that medical ... reports were devoured and discu... avidly as stockbrokers discuss mark... prices.

None followed the struggle for ... keenly than Bombay's film pro...

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CASE STUDY

Staying Alive

When Bachchan underwent an operation on Monday, August 2, his lungs got infected and he developed pneumonia. In order to clear away the fluid in his lungs, a tracheal tube A was inserted: at two-hourly intervals, he was given a physiotherapic massage and forced to cough out the fluids through the tube. The tube carried air directly to his lungs: it was fitted to a bellows mechanism with oxygen regulating devices. Thus Bachchan was fed air and the respirator did his breathing for him.

A Swan Ganz catheter B went straight into his heart. This monitored various heart pressures.

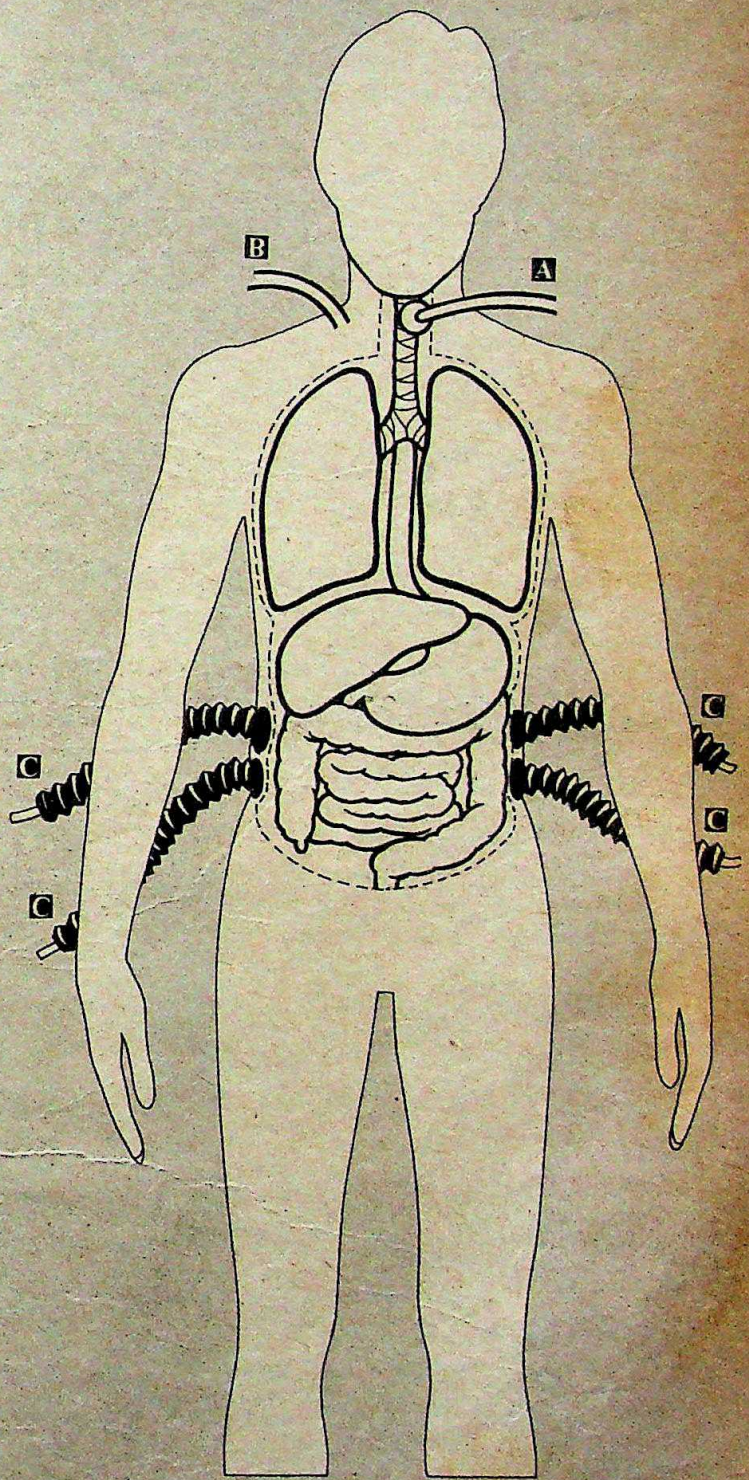
The area between the dotted lines represents the hollow abdominal cavity. In the first three days following the injury in Bangalore, this entire cavity filled up with bile and fecal matter from perforations in the intestine. As a result, all the organs in the region got infected. The liver got jaundiced and the intestines were covered with septic spots.

In Bombay, on August 2, Bachchan was operated on by reopening the Right Paramedian incision made in Bangalore. This incision leaves the whole cavity open to view: when the doctors opened him up, they found the whole region flooded with pus and waste matter. The cavity was cleaned out with saline, betadine, metrogyl and chloromycetin.

After this, four corrugated rubber drains C were fitted. These have thin catheters inside them, which are used to pump in washes of normal saline, betadine, metrogyl and chloromycetin. These automatically kept draining the pus from his abdomen.

Bachchan was subjected to a rigorous regimen to keep his body functions stable. After the physiotherapic massage he was forced to cough out fluids through the tracheal tube. Immediately after the massage, his insides were washed out with antibiotics or salines, and the drained pus was sent for cultures. His bodily functions were monitored. This cycle continued day and night.

On the evening of August 9, his stomach started bleeding slightly internally partly as a result of the steroids he had been fed in massive doses to keep his body's fluid parameters normal. A Ryle's tube was inserted and his stomach washed out immediately and the bleeding thus minimised. At 1 p.m. that night a pus culture was flown to London where Guy's Hospital examined it to find out if any antibiotics unavailable in India could be more effective in combating the ills of the superstar.



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whom Bachchan represents a bottomless gold-mine. His lean, brooding looks and his authoritative acting have made Bachchan not just a cult figure but the highest paid star (currently estimated at Rs 35 lakh per film) in Indian film history and keeping vigil with his fans were feverishly anxious producers who have crores riding on the star. Now, suddenly, Bachchan's larger-than-life screen image had been rudely stripped away and he lay stricken in a hospital bed, a mere mortal, vulnerable and dangerously ill.

Contrary to popular impression, the financial stake which rides on Bachchan's health is lower than ever before. Riding at the pinnacle of a career which has defined the state-of-the-art for the entire film industry, Bachchan decided last January to reduce the killing pressure of work he had undertaken by indiscriminately signing on for projects. Bent on cutting down on the schedule which forced him to work up to three shifts a day after a serious bout of asthma in Delhi, the superstar spent the last few months completing existing projects and undertaking no new ones. As a result, when he had his accident in end-July, Bachchan had only two incomplete films on the sets, *Coolie* and Ramesh Bahl's *Pukaar*. Sippy's *Shakti* was already complete, *Nastik* was completed except for the dubbing, and one Madras film *Andha Kanoon* which featured Bachchan in a guest appearance, had a few sequences left to be shot.

Large Stakes: But for a film industry which has come to depend on Bachchan as its only instantly saleable name, the stake in the actor was much greater than just an immediate matter of blocked finances. Leading producer Prakash Mehra had planned two films around him *Sharabee*, and *Kayaar*, Ramesh Sippy was already planning his next venture *Shatranj* with Bachchan in the lead. Director Raj Sippy has cast him for *Taala Chaabi* and Amyad Khan's *Lambee Chaudee* and a host of other producers were reportedly waiting in the sidelines for him to start signing films once again.

With doctors predicting a minimum six-month convalescence and possibly a whole year off work for the star, it was clear that most producers would have to hold their horses. "But this delay means nothing at all," said Yash Johar emphatically, "any body can afford to wait eight to ten months with a man like Amitabh in your picture. Today he has eased the number of pictures in hand, but in the past he has been ill for three and four months at a time when he used to sign ten times the number of films, and nothing happened to anybody."

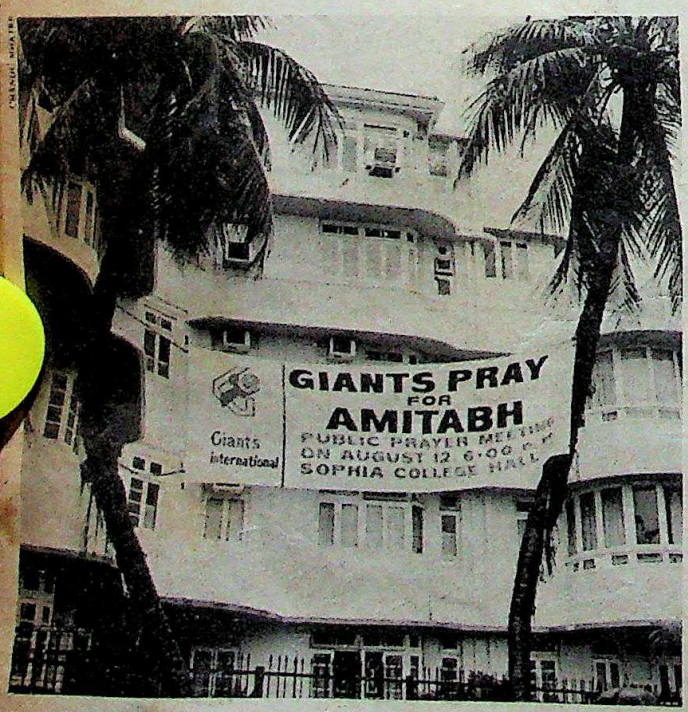
Denying that the film industry was only worried about its investment in the man, Rati Agnihotri, who stars opposite Bachchan in *Coolie*, asserted: "From my conversations with producers I am certain that they are not bothered about their films so much as they are about the man himself. Not a single producer has spoken to me about his movie. I think they have all developed a genuine liking for Amitabh."

Fight Sequence: The key to Bachchan's survival is the medical drama that accompanied the star's most exacting real-life role. The high points of his battle were:

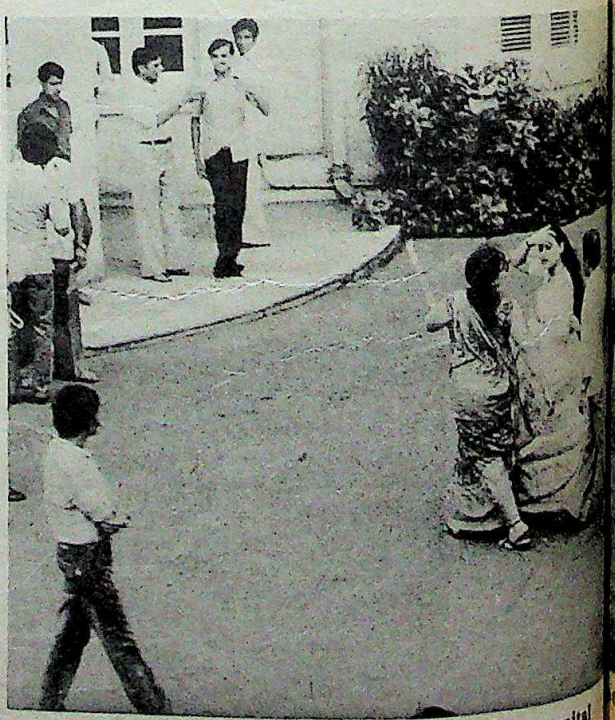
July 24: Bachchan was in Bang... shooting Manmohan Desai's film *Coolie*... the tragedy struck during a fight sequ... being filmed at the city's Jnana Bha... University campus. The university libr... had been rearranged to resemble the in... of a bank and the script called for the vi... played by Puneet Issar, an experienced s... man, to kick Bachchan in the stom... Bachchan was required to spin around f... the blow and fall heavily on a steel table... typical fashion, Bachchan refused to t... double take over and did the scene him...

While landing on the table, how... his lower abdomen came in painful co... with the edge of the table. At first, no... took note of the event. Desai applaudes... star's realistic acting but stopped half-... when he and the rest of the crew rea... that something was seriously wrong. Ba... chan, according to eye-witness reports, s... up, took two steps rubbing his stomach... then crumpled to the floor, his face c... torted in agony. In the belief that it w... temporary and minor injury, Bachchan w... rushed back to the West End Hotel suite... had occupied for the past two weeks.

When the pain failed to subside... doctor who was a family acquaintance... called in to examine the star. The doctor... nothing serious was wrong and prescri... sedatives to let the star sleep it off. It... now around 8 p.m., almost five hours... the incident had taken place and his c... dition seemed to have worsened. Bachch... actress-wife Jaya Bachchan, who had f...



Banner up at a Bombay building announcing a meeting for Amitabh



PICTURES BY CHANDU BHATRE

Jaya Bachchan outside the entrance of the hospital

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...o Bangalore with their two children to ...end the ld holidays with her husband, was ...coming increasingly anxious. She later ...d doctors that he spent the first night in ...reme agony.

July 25: The next morning, Sunday, ...chchan's personal physician, Dr K. M. ...ah, flew down from Bombay in reply to ...s urgent SOS. He expressed his unhappi... ...ss with Bachchan's condition but being a ...ral practitioner he lacked the authority ...ke the matter further. His concern, ...wever, was enough to produce some ...lts. The star, still obviously in excruciat... ...e agony, was rushed to St Philomena's ...pital for an X-ray and admittance. But ...en after the X-rays, an air of optimism ...evailed. A senior surgeon examined the ...ts and stated that: "There is no cause for ...rm". The X-rays failed to show any ...ious injury but this could be because the ...cent was not X-rayed properly. In an erect ...ture the physical examination revealed a ...der spot in the area where the star had ...e in contact with the table but little else. Medical experts at the hospital, how... ...n are convinced that Bachchan should ...e been given a more thorough examin... ...n, and subsequent facts seem to support ...ir view.

July 26: On Monday, with Bachchan ...wing no signs of improvement, though ...was fully conscious, another X-ray was ...formed which again either failed to reveal ...serious complications or was not exa... ...ed carefully enough. In fact, the X-... ...shows gas trapped under the diaphragm which could only have come from a ruptured intestine. A Bombay doctor later said: "In our profession we treat a patient from the day he comes to us and don't look back for causes or try to blame earlier treatment. But there is no denying that the X-ray taken the day after the accident shows signs of gas collected under the diaphragm, a sure sign of perforation or leakage." Some doctors however feel that any patient in agony from such an injury for more than six hours normally needs surgery or a test of abdominal contents to detect infection.

By now, Bachchan had developed what is referred to medically as "board-like rigidity" of the stomach and the injury area had distended. But still the medical bulletin issued by the hospital stated that the star was "improving". In fact, three days of untreated intestinal leakage had resulted in severe internal infection and peritonitis, the inflammation of the abdominal lining. The rupture of the large intenstine, had spilt faecal contents, dangerously toxic, into the abdomen resulting in septicaemia. At the time, none of this was known and Dr Shah was in a quandary.

He felt instinctively that something was seriously wrong but did not know whether flying the star to Bombay would aggravate the injury. Nevertheless, he consulted Jaya and seats were booked on the Monday evening flight. By the evening, however, the patient's condition had deteriorated markedly and the seats were cancelled. Though it had been two days since the incident, the outside world, including the media, remained in the dark. On instructions from the star's family, the hospital had kept a tight-lipped silence on Bachchan's condition except for terse words of encouragement that turned out to be hopelessly false.

July 27: Things started moving on Tuesday when anxious messages from Rajiv Gandhi in the US arrived and Chief Minister Gundu Rao and senior state officials got into the act. Dr Shah took advantage of the sudden air of urgency and called in Dr H.S. Bhatt, one of the leading urologists in the country who had attended the late Jayaprakash Narayan. Bhatt's diagnosis was brisk and decisive. Bachchan, he said, required an immediate operation. Even then, there was some agonising delay over the possibility of flying in surgeons from Bombay. But by now Bachchan's condition was too serious for the 12-hour delay that this would have entailed. He was running a high fever, vomitting repeatedly and by 2.30 that afternoon his heartbeat had run to 180 as against the normal 72. He had also slipped into a coma and appeared to be sinking.

Frantically, the operation theatre was readied and the star was wheeled in. Directing the operation were Bhatt and Dr Joseph Anthony, a general surgeon aided by Dr Jai Singh. Waiting anxiously in the ante-room of the operation theatre were Jaya, Amitabh's mother Teji, his brother Ajitabh and film producer Yash Johar. Eyewitness reports obtained by INDIA TODAY indicate that the operating theatre resembled a railway station. Several junior doctors and nurses hovered around the table as

Gandhi and Sonia arrive at Breach Candy to visit the ailing actor

Rajiv Gandhi in the hospital foyer

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vicarious spectators—a critical lapse of discipline considering the seriousness of the star's condition and the negative effect it could have on the actual operation.

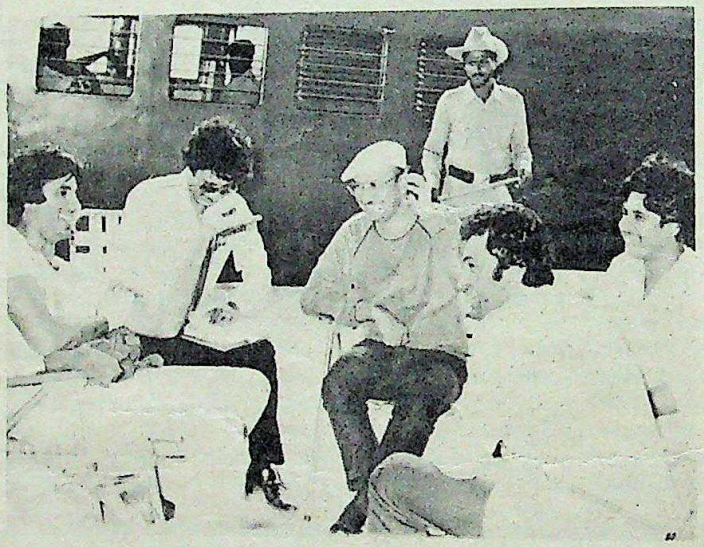
Heavy Infection: One eyewitness states that when the incision into Bachchan's abdomen was made, "pus burst out like a fountain". The team of surgeons discovered a hole in the small intestine where it joined up with the large intestine. The pus was cleaned up and the hole stitched and a tube was inserted in the abdomen to allow the excess pus to seep out. Some doctors, however, feel that one drain was not enough and at least three should have been inserted to reduce the chances of infection. The operation took a total of three hours and before it ended at 7 p.m., three specialists from Bombay had flown in to observe the final stages. They were Dr M.K. Gandhi, chief of cardiology, Suri Hospital, Dr Sharad Shah, a gastro- enterologist, and Dr Shirish Bhansali, an abdominal surgeon.

By now, the word had spread and pools of anxious fans had gathered outside the hospital in spite of the pounding rain. The crucial vigil had begun. The first 24 hours at the most vital hours after any major operation and it was now a question of waiting and hope and prayer. Manmohan Desai had been visiting the Raja Rajeshwari temple in Bangalore every day, praying for the star's life and giving daily offerings at the temple.

July 28: By midnight Bachchan was given a 50 per cent chance of survival by the doctors but next morning ushered in further complications. His lungs had deteriorated and pneumonia was suspected. Further, the star was becoming increasingly delirious. The doctors went into a huddle regarding the advisability of examining his chest through a bronchoscope, a major decision at that stage of Bachchan's struggle for survival. The decision was put off till later but blood samples were taken for blood-gas tests (to determine the blood acidity, oxygen and carbon di-oxide tension in the blood). The tests revealed that Bachchan's life still hung by a very slender thread. He was immediately put onto nebulised oxygen (with a water vapour content) to keep the lung secretions from hardening. Bachchan, in a state of delirium, had bouts of violence, trying to snatch at tubes connected to him and medical paraphernalia lying around him. "He was controlled only by his brother and Jaya," said a source. "His mother Teji would call him 'Raja' while Jaya called him 'Amitji'. Only the family could manage him, nobody else."

July 29: By Thursday night, with Bachchan's condition getting worse—doctors were now concerned about his kidneys—a decision was taken to fly the star to Bombay though the proposed shift was kept a strict secret.

July 30: By Friday morning, Bachchan's condition had improved although he had developed slight jaundice. It was decided to fly him out on the evening Airbus flight rather than a chartered flight in which the ride would have been bumpy. Pressed to explain the reason for the decision one surgeon who attended on him said that Bachchan's platelet count was low. Platelets are responsible for the coagulation of blood and not enough platelets were available in Bangalore, neither was the facility for separation of these plate-like cells which requires a centrifuge. Bombay was the logical choice but the Bombay airbus flight was three hours late and by the time three rows of seats had been removed to accommodate the mini intensive care unit, it was well past midnight.



H.K. RAJASEKHAR

Amitabh relaxing on the sets of *Coolie*: fighting spirit

July 31: In typical film fashion, Bachchan's removal from the hospital was conducted like a top secret operation. While the phalanx of reporters and photographers waited in ambush at the front door, Bachchan's stretcher-borne figure was spirited out through the rear door and into a waiting ambulance. A police escort accompanied the cavalcade to the airport and at 12.40 Bachchan took off for Bombay and the next act in the life and death drama.

Yet, even as the drama shifted to Bombay, it left behind some vital and nagging questions, foremost among them being the initial medical care given to the star. Medical experts almost unanimously feel that [illegible] chchan had been operated on the first [illegible] days after he was admitted, he would [illegible] been back on the ses of *Coolie* in a six [illegible] time. However, value judgments are easy [illegible] make in hindsight and the team of doctors [illegible] St Philomena's insist that every possible [illegible] thing was done to conform to medical standards.

August 2: Nonetheless, Bachchan [illegible] to undergo a second major operation [illegible] after he arrived at Breach Candy for a [illegible] abdomen" when stitches administered [illegible] Bangalore gave way.

Bachchan's second operation in Bombay turned into an eight-hour battle for [illegible] and at the end of it, he was still very much [illegible] the critical list.

By last week, Bachchan [illegible] glassed-off booth in the intensive care unit on the seventh floor of Breach Candy Hospital was a maze of machinery and intricate life-support systems. Tubes leading to his abdomen fed antibiotics directly onto the site of the infection while doctors were required to flush [illegible] twice daily. A tracheal tube had been inserted in his throat to facilitate breathing since the star's asthmatic tendency put an additional strain on his lungs. A respirator strapped to his chest ensured a regular supply and a string of monitors wired to other parts of his body kept constant check on [illegible] seen complications develop.

But though the mood was sombre, it was hardly one of defeat. Doctors felt that he had crossed the hump and the worst was over.

Improvement: Three days after the operation, Bachchan was able to sit up for the first time for physiotherapic massage, listening to light jazz on a Walkman and writing notes to family members. By the time Mrs Gandhi flew into Bombay to visit the star on August 8, he was being fed small doses of liquids—a sign that his intestines had resumed working. Doctors, however, insist that it will be at least another few days before he can be declared out of danger.

"It is only his will-power that has kept him through," said Yash Johar, who rushed to Bangalore with spare doses of platelet-rich plasma and had stayed with the family through their most anxious moments. "If it had been anybody else, he would have succumbed," added Ramesh Sippy. "We don't know what a fighter Amitabh is. He just never gives up."

—DILIP BOBB with CHANDER UDAY SINGH in Bombay and GITA ABRAHAM in [illegible]

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large spectrum of US opinion, including decision-makers, the fact that Indian ign policy is fundamentally and essen- a foreign policy of an independent ."said an Indian diplomat. This was can achievement in a capital which ally views world affairs in terms of k and white and tends to ignore the grey in between.

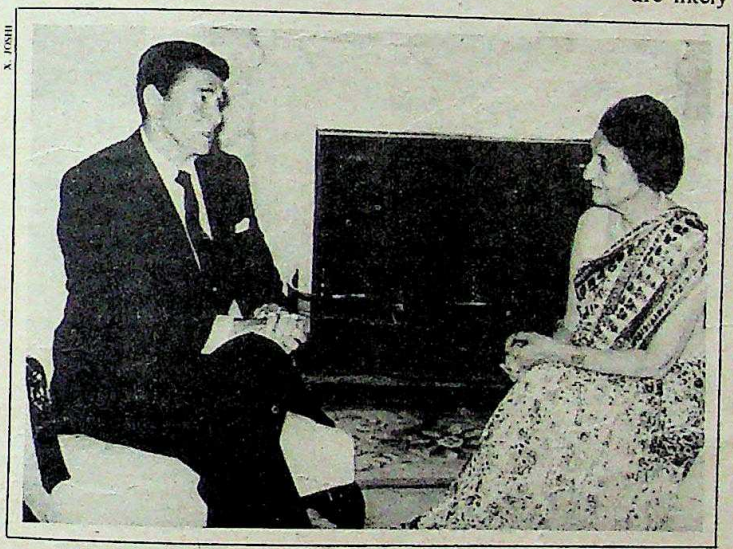
The main obstacles facing Mrs Gandhi the stereotypes boldly etched in Ameri- ds regarding her and India—that she a communist, arrogant and pompous, India was soft on communism, was anti- rican and pro-Soviet, its economy a ger and poverty its most visible symbol. a determination that was all too evi- Mrs Gandhi resolutely swept aside the cts with a panache that surprised even mbers of her official entourage. "It a superb performance," an awed official who has panied her on innumer- foreign trips.

The erosion of the stereo- egan, in fact, at Cancun ctober when the two lea- et for the first time and n better than either ap- d to have expected. Soon Reagan wrote Mrs Gan- ng letter suggesting they up their meeting, and Gandhi replied on an equal- dial note. Finally, on l this year, Barnes de- Mrs Gandhi a letter of ion which she accepted laacrity which left the prepared Indian foreign somewhat off balance.

Smiling Success: In Wash- the first signal of success flashed television screens when Mrs Gandhi agan emerged from their closed-door in the Oval Office wreathed in "Just one look at their expressions r relaxed attitude and we knew the gone off well," remarked an Indian ion member. According to White ources, the half hour the two leaders gether laid some solid foundations ere further consolidated during the session. The line-up was Shultz, y Secretary Donald Regan, Vice- t George Bush and National Securi- or Bill Clark for the US, and P.C. der, G. Parthasarthy, Sharada Pra- pan Sengupta and Indian Ambassa- the US, K.R. Narayanan in Mrs 's party. Reagan's favoured jelly be- re on the conference table but since ndhi didn't reach out for them the did without them.

e tone for the talks was set by swiftly getting out of the way an issue that has bedevilled Indo-US ties for four years: the Tarapur fuel question. In a move which represented a climb-down on both sides, (*see page 81*) the two sides agreed that the Tarapur reactor would be fuelled with uranium supplied from France, leaving the dispute about rights on the spent fuel hanging somewhat uncertainly in the air. Yet, with that bone of contention safely hidden away, after the plenary talks and the working luncheon hosted by Shultz at the State Department, a number of broadbrush results finally emerged:

The US applauds India's efforts to normalise relations with China and Pakistan. The US also has a community of interests with India in fostering stability in the region and India plays an important role in this objective.



Mrs Gandhi and Reagan in the Oval Office: setting the tone

Both countries want to see political solutions to the Afghanistan situation and the Iran-Iraq war. The US, while not overly insistent on the subject, would like to see India play a more activist role in Afghanistan and the Gulf region. Mrs Gandhi assured Reagan that India was as keen to see all foreign troops out of Afghanistan but insisted that this would only be possible if arming of the rebels is halted and the Soviets are convinced that the Afghan Government is not an anti-Soviet one.

Mrs Gandhi also politey but firmly informed Reagan that Pakistan had assured the Soviets that US-supplied arms would never be used against Soviet troops. "Against whom will these arms be used?" she asked, adding that this development forces India to increase its own defence expenditure. "I don't want to suggest that our response reassured our Indian friends," said a White House official, "but we hope they understand."

The US recognises that India has a highly successful economic programme and has taken giant strides in agriculture. While America's future commitment to World Bank, Asian Development Bank and International Development Agency (IDA) funding remains hazy, the Indians were able to extract some concrete concessions. The Reagan Administration will commit itself to previous levels of IDA funding for the current replenishment period and will not oppose the third instalment as it did the first. The US, however, will insist that India should concentrate on commercial borrowing and it is willing to work out arrangements to facilitate this.

The US was willing to consider arms purchases by India on a case by case basis. Future arms deals between the two countries are likely to be negotiated in areas where India does not seek joint production terms.

1984 and 1985 will be designated a special Indo-US year with emphasis on cultural, educational and scientific cooperation. The activities will include joint scientific task forces and a blue ribbon panel— a prestigious body headed by Reagan's science advisor. Dr George Keyworth and M.K. Menon of India.

The overall view was that Mrs Gandhi's visit had greatly enhanced friendly relations between the two countries and given the US a better understanding of how important the two sides were to each other.

EASILY the most successful aspect of Mrs Gandhi's Washington *tour de force* were her personal appearances, behind closed doors, before the Senate and House Foreign Affairs Committees. These committees play as important a role as the White House and the Senate in shaping US foreign policy, and Mrs Gandhi succeeded in wooing them shamelessly. According to several eyewitness accounts, Mrs Gandhi had members of Congress eating out of her hand.

Unlike diplomats and bureaucrats, Congressmen and Senators are a feisty lot, well-armed with tough and embarrassing questions. But Mrs Gandhi waltzed through the inquisition with supreme aplomb. Her reception in the Senate, according to sources, was nothing short of enthusiastic. "They applauded her twice which is something I've never seen happen," said one source, "these guys just don't stand up and clap for anybody." Inspired by her performance, even

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Rajiv made an excellent impression and answered questions with a maturity and intelligence he rarely shows.

Impressive Reception: Her performance in the Senate was impressive and her short address drew concentrated applause from even such dour personalities as Senators John Stennis of Mississippi and John Tower of Texas—both members of the Armed Services Committee. "The place was packed, I've never seen it so full," said an insider, "except perhaps when Menachem Begin made his recent appearance." One senator, a conservative, was moved enough to drawl at the end of the meeting: "I'd just like to say that we've heard lot of foreign leaders but you make a lotta sense." Clement J. Jablocki, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, described the encounter as "very pleasant and very direct" compared to her 1971 visit when she was "so irritated, with a chip on her shoulder."

On the House of Representatives side, too, the atmosphere was warm and relaxed except for one pointed tough question from Tom Lantoss of California. Millicent Fenwick asked toward the end: "We Americans are very spoiled. So I've got to ask you this question: do you love us?" To which Mrs Gandhi replied: "All of us in India love you. I do not know of any country in the world where people don't love the United States." There followed a massive ovation.

Emboldened by her success in her toughest hurdles so far, Mrs Gandhi made the traditional pilgrimage to the National Press Club, serene and confident. The tickets for the affair, at $12 (Rs 108) a seat, had been sold out two weeks in advance. Nearly 600 people attended what turned out to be a free-wheeling discussion about the Emergency, the Indian economy, Indo-Pakistan relations and, inevitably, Rajiv Gandhi who happened to be present. Though her replies were the standard pitch and no different from standard positions she has taken in the past, her presentation and her relaxed manner was enough to win her most of the rounds and repeated applause: for example, her answer to the question: "Does India tilt? Which way?" Said Mrs Gandhi: "I think we stand upright."

But all was not wine and roses. The Indian Embassy and some members of the visiting delegation made some inexcusable blunders that could cost dearly in the future. The Indians, probably unknown to Mrs Gandhi, snubbed Treasury Secretary Regan who is akin to a finance minister and makes all decisions regarding World Bank funding and concessional aid. Regan had asked for a private meeting with Mrs Gandhi and the Indians turned him down. Regan responded by rejecting an invitation to Mrs Gandhi's dinner.

Similarly, Congressman Jack Kemp, a promising presidential candidate and a personal friend of the President, failed to persuade the embassy to allow him and two colleagues—Congressmen Jerry Lewis and Micky Edwards—a few moments with the prime minister. All three are key members of the House Sub-committee on Foreign Operations—a key committee that holds the purse strings to American foreign aid.

Bureaucratic Flaws: Ambassador Harry Barnes—a man totally dedicated to improving Indo-US relations—also had his feathers ruffled. He had arranged for several important senators to meet informally with Rajiv but the Indian side got involved in an unseemly turf battle claiming that such meetings should be arranged by them. As a result, the meeting was called off. World Bank President Clausen was not received, as is customary, in the lobby of the hotel when he arrived for his personal meeting with Mrs Gandhi. Instead, he took the lift to the 15th floor by himself and was kept waiting in the ante-room before he was actually ushered in for his meeting. He left grim-faced.

But despite the flaws, which were typical bureaucratic bungles, the Washington visit's importance remained undisturbed. Both sides took tough stands when it was required and respected each other more for it. "We didn't compromise or apologise for our policies," said one participant. Added another, "India's foreign policy on August 6 was exactly what it was on July 26," emphasising that the purpose of the e was to transmit an appreciation of position rather than change it. The South Block is that while Wash capacity to do India good may be lim its capacity to do India harm loom larger.

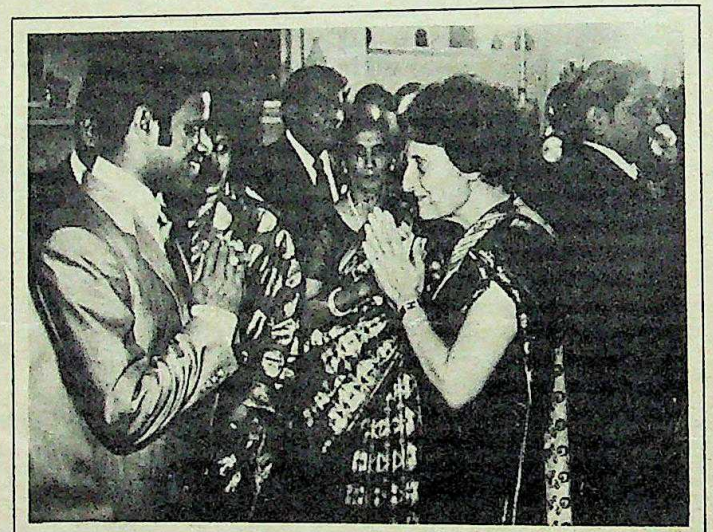
The issues that prompted this tion are compelling and formed the k of the wide-ranging talks. Some of th areas were:

► The Soviet invasion of Afghan changed the strategic map of the isolated India in several forums an the Zia-ul-Haq regime in Pakistan lease of life. The US has contribu ignoring Indian points of view and a fact underscored forcefully by billion arms deal with Pakistan, in two squadrons of F-16

► India's friendship Soviet Union has been unwarrantedly in strat lours and the fountainh this view was Wash which, under Reagan, verted to a new cold w the Soviets and ini many countries in Ind mediate neighbourhood her.

► India's economic were not being fully u in the US, the world's storehouse of capital an how.

► Frigid Indo-US blocking India's attem prove ties with Pakistan Gulf region where US perceptions dictated a tic attitude towards In



At the Indian Embassy: holding court

clusion. Mrs Gandhi was at pains to to the American side that from the view of remittances and oil supplies and its stability are vital to Indian

But the success the Indian side putting its views across, and the reaction to it, was also a result of changed US perceptions of India gradually taken place over the last It was a culmination of various fact Gandhi's statements at the Melbou monwealth Conference, her meet British Prime Minister Margaret last March, the success of her discus the Saudi Arabian rulers, the effort the Indian Government to norm tions with China and even the progress to a no-war pact with Pa contributed largely to the change tions in the US. It was summed up in Deputy Secretary of State Wa sel's briefing to newsmen on the Gandhi visit when he stated: "I th

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...s truly non-aligned. We respect her ...ce in the non-aligned movement."

...titude Shifts: However, there were ...ignificant international cross-currents ...ntributed to the Reagan-Gandhi love-...The last couple of years have witnessed ...creasing Indian disenchantment with ...viet Union and a corresponding dis-...tment in the US regarding Pakistan. ...Gandhi has made no scathing con-...sion of the Soviet presence in Afgha-...but has made it abundantly clear in ...e meetings that she is becoming in-...gly edgy and impatient with Soviet ...gence in the region. On the presti-...nation-wide 'Meet The Press' pro-..., she bluntly remarked that "the ...s do not agree with our view on ...istan. We do not agree with the ...ist system, the Marxist ..." and she went on to ...e the "great difficulty" ...as facing with the ...s in India.

...that brief statement ...y millions of Americans, ...d expressed not only her ...ion to the Soviets in ...istan but also her own ...s with the shrill, stri-...position to her from ...Moscow-backed Com-...Party. On the other side ...ion, relations have sour-...een the US and Pakistan ...eral reasons. Senior ad-...ration officials have con-...hat the White House is ...d by widespread anti-...anism in Pakistan and ...e stability of the Zia-ul-...gime.

...ere are also serious differences bet-...e two countries over the placement of ...American ground technicians in ..., the nuclear bomb project, the ...ction of a Voice Of America trans-... facility and compensation for ... to the US Embassy in 1979. ...'s official invective over American ...n Iran—including Jimmy Carter's ...rescue mission—also served to ...American officialdom.

...-tale sign of American impatience ...istan was the strong language con-... the most recent international se-...hancement bill—the arms assis-...programme—passed by the Senate ...Relations Committee. The report ..."The committee is concerned that ...housand Pakistani political figures ... to be detained, some under very ...conditions. There have been credi-...ts of torture and abuse of such

"This was a clear warning shot across Pakistan's bow," a US official confided. "This explicitly warns Pakistan that if it does not improve its human rights and civil liberties record Congress will vote against any future authorisations of assistance to that country."

The open-arms welcome to Indira Gandhi and to India, the sudden emergence of a 'Hindi-Amriki-bhai-bhai' atmosphere is not cosmetic. It is an across-the-board phenomenon. When Alexander Haig was scheduled to visit India—the trip was cancelled because of the outbreak of the Polish crisis—he had secretly cabled the US Embassy in New Delhi that it should respond favourably to any arms purchase requests that the Indians might bring up.

Rethinking: More recently, Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger quietly asked the Indian Government not to read wrong signals in American aid to Pakistan. According to reliable sources Weinberger reportedly told the Indians: "Just let us know what you want." For the last two years India has had on-again-off-again arms talks with the US on the purchase of certain arms including TOW missiles. The Indians have been reluctant to agree to language stating that the shipment of these arms can be cut off by the US without notice. The Indians feel this cut-off clause discriminates against them. But in recent months the Pentagon has taken pains to show the Indians that the cut-off clause accompanies all such arms agreements including those signed with Pakistan and Israel.

Some observers feel that the American rethinking on India started before Cancun. They believe that the process started on Capitol Hill during the debate on selling the F-16 fighter-bomber to Pakistan. The Reagan Administration came within embarrassing inches of being defeated on that issue. But the turnaround in Congress was palpable even shortly before Mrs Gandhi's arrival. Its most significant manifestation was a special statement put out by Senator John Glenn, a vociferous critic of India on the nuclear and non-proliferation issue. He stated in anticipation of the Gandhi visit: "I believe our strategic interests in the region would be served by an improved relationship with India—a country which is strategically, demographically, and economically the most important state in the arc... it is very much an emerging economic, military and diplomatic power... and over its 35 years of independence it has shown a remarkable degree of political stability... But as a nation with a claim to world leadership India must recognise the political liabilities of a too close association with an imperialistic Soviet Union... Mrs Gandhi's visit provides an opportunity to embark on a new relationship with the world's largest democracy."

T. Kesri

Rajiv Gandhi with his family at the UN: crowded schedule

Receptive Atmosphere: Even if the Gandhi visit had not resulted in any concrete developments it would still have reflected the increasing perception here of India as major actor on the world stage that could not be indefinitely ignored. Add to this receptive atmosphere Mrs Gandhi's charm and patience even under hostile questioning and there was a recipe for a successful conquest of hearts and minds. What helped further was Reagan's willingness to pull out all the stops for the Gandhi visit.

Just before her arrival the heads of major government departments received memos from the White House telling them in no uncertain terms that the President wanted the occasion to be a "turning point" in Indo-US relations and that they were to take certain specified, concrete steps to achieve this particular goal.

EVEN as the euphoria evaporates, it is clear that to talk of turning points is yet premature. Images are made and unmade with very alarming rapidity in international diplomacy, and how long the new image will last, whether it will become stronger or will crack and collapse are questions that must gnaw policy makers and analysts alike in India, the US and the south Asian region. The suddenness of Reagan's still not fully explained decision to give friendship a chance to pilot Indo-US relations raises questions about is permanence.

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US foreign policy has becoming highly temperamental in recent years, changing its tone as well as sights in confused, incoherent responses to unpalatable developments in the world arena. Under Reagan, foreign policy has appeared to have changed in more directions than under any of his recent predecessors; and key decision-making centres—the Soviet Union, western Europe and China—have been affected by this change along with India.

India is not really important for the US in the global context of its foreign policy, and it remains to be seen if the Reagan-Gandhi thaw is part of a new American script on international relations or an isolated second look at this region. In an interview last month, French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson, who was visiting New Delhi last fortnight, said, "The trouble is that America is too big a corporation; everything gets treated sectorwise and there's no overall view." Nevertheless, the new effort cannot be isolated from the cautious first attempts that are taking place to reconstruct Soviet-US relations, the yawning gap that has come to separate certain European and US policies, and the strains in Sino-American relations.

Comforting though this may be, the list of divides between India and the United States is too long to be ignored. "We move from unenlightened disagreement to enlightened disagreement, when you know why you're disagreeing," says an Indian diplomat. In the past the differences have been expressed in acrimonious terms; it is the hope in South Block that the two countries will no longer shout at each other when they discuss Indian Ocean security, US arms aid to Pakistan, Lebanon, Kampuchea, Gulf security and the rapid deployment force, Afghanistan, North-South economic cooperation and multi-lateral aid. And that having understood what makes the other tick, there will be fresh initiatives to narrow policy differences.

Talking Together: "Mrs Gandhi has done her bit," said one delegation member, "it is now up to the diplomats and experts." The follow-up is likely to be swift it cautious. Indian Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee and US Treasury Secretary Regan were scheduled to meet last fortnight after Mrs Gandhi's visit. The prestigious 'blue-ribbon' team of scientists from each country will meet this October to discuss collaborating in research including such areas of key interest as blindness, immunology, family planning and leprosy. A high-powered team of US businessmen is expected to visit India later this year. But the next high point will be when President Reagan decides to make his return visit to New Delhi.

Much will depend on how the concrete follow-up evolves. Indeed, in foreign policy terms several issues will not be clear [illegible] Gandhi visits Moscow in Septem[illegible] Pakistan's Zia-ul-Haq makes his pil[illegible] to Washington in December. Thou[illegible] Gandhi remained firm in her positi[illegible] friendship with the Soviet Union re[illegible] prime goal of Indian foreign policy a[illegible] not preclude equally genuine friendsh[illegible] the United States, there are trem[illegible] unease in Moscow. *Pravda*, in th[illegible] comment on the visit so far made [illegible] Soviet media, blamed the United St[illegible] "not fully understanding the inde[illegible] foreign policy line of India".

The Soviets are not likely to [illegible] negative view of an improved rela[illegible] between India and the US if they are [illegible] that Mrs Gandhi has not yielded to [illegible] framework of regional and inter[illegible] relations, specifically the network o[illegible] and informal groupings which are [illegible] on the containment of Moscow's m[illegible] and that the new openings in busi[illegible] investment do not integrate India [illegible] ther in the western-oriented capitali[illegible]

Reaction: Mrs Gandhi's vi[illegible] drawn no immediate fire from Paki[illegible] other country which might have [illegible] anxiety. For the first time Paki[illegible] reacted coolly if not positively to t[illegible] bility of an Indo-US rapproche[illegible] even the possibility of India buying [illegible] On the contrary, there is now [illegible] ambience for no-war pact negotia[illegible] Pakistan will be obliged to respond [illegible] suggestions of a joint commission [illegible] friendship treaty. The Pakistan st[illegible] change if the US restricts the [illegible] weapons supply or if India purch[illegible] quantities of US arms before the c[illegible] of a no-war pact or a friendship [illegible]

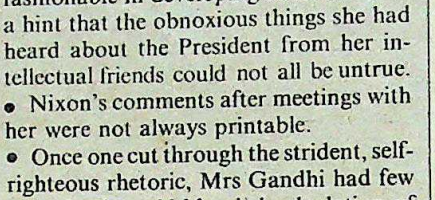
A genuine improvement in [illegible] relations and the Sino-Indian bord[illegible] would reduce the relevance of In[illegible] tegic relationship with the Soviet U[illegible] if Mrs Gandhi decides to translate [illegible] first' concept into reality, the p[illegible] India's global foreign policy could [illegible] major change. Ironically enough, [illegible] is ushered in, it will almost certain[illegible] the path that the Janata Party at[illegible] follow—a path that came in for [illegible] criticism from Mrs Gandhi herse[illegible] undeniably the foreign policy ar[illegible] that ill-starred grouping who g[illegible] non-aligned stance a firmer foun[illegible] moving away from the shadow o[illegible] umbrella and trying to bridge the [illegible] chasm. If Mrs Gandhi, who in th[illegible] and early '70s was the architect [illegible] closeness to the Soviet Union, dec[illegible] the same road of equidistance fo[illegible] superpowers, her voyage to [illegible] could turn out to be much more [illegible] discovery.

INDERJIT [illegible]
in Washington with [illegible]

Kissinger On Mrs G

VINTAGE '71

- Nixon and Mrs Gandhi were not intended by fate to be personally congenial. Her assumption of almost hereditary moral superiority and her moody silences brought out all of Nixon's latent insecurities.
- Her bearing toward Nixon combined a disdain for a symbol of capitalism quite fashionable in developing countries with a hint that the obnoxious things she had heard about the President from her intellectual friends could not all be untrue.
- Nixon's comments after meetings with her were not always printable.
- Once one cut through the strident, self-righteous rhetoric, Mrs Gandhi had few peers in the cold-blooded calculation of the elements of power.
- By 1971 our relations with India had achieved a state of exasperatedly strained cordiality, like a couple that can neither separate nor get along. Our relations with Pakistan were marked by a superficial friendliness that had little content.



Nixon-Gandhi Talks, November 4–5, '71

- Nixon considered her a cold-blooded practitioner of power politics. Mrs Gandhi began expressing admiration for Nixon's handling of Vietnam and the China initiative, in the manner of a professor praising a slightly backward student.
- Mrs Gandhi was as formidable as she was condescending.
- Her dislike of Nixon, expressed in the icy formality of her manner, was perhaps compounded by the uneasy recognition that this man whom her whole upbringing caused her to disdain perceived international relations in a manner uncomfortably close to her own.
- Mrs Gandhi is a strong personality relentlessly pursuing India's national interest with single-mindedness and finesse. I respected her strength even when her policies were hurtful to our national interest.
- The Nixon-Gandhi conversation thus turned into a classic dialogue of the deaf . . . Mrs Gandhi listened to what was in fact one of Nixon's better presentations with aloof indifference. Steely lady. The conversation between Nixon and Mrs Gandhi confirmed the never-never land of US-Indian relations.

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Season For Smiles

FROM the moment she landed in a chartered Air- India jet at New York's John F. Kennedy Airport on the sunny afternoon of July 27, Mrs Gandhi exuded optimism and openness, a warmth ...ssly cut across protocol and security ...rs to create a deeply personal im... ...on during her first state visit to the US ...years.

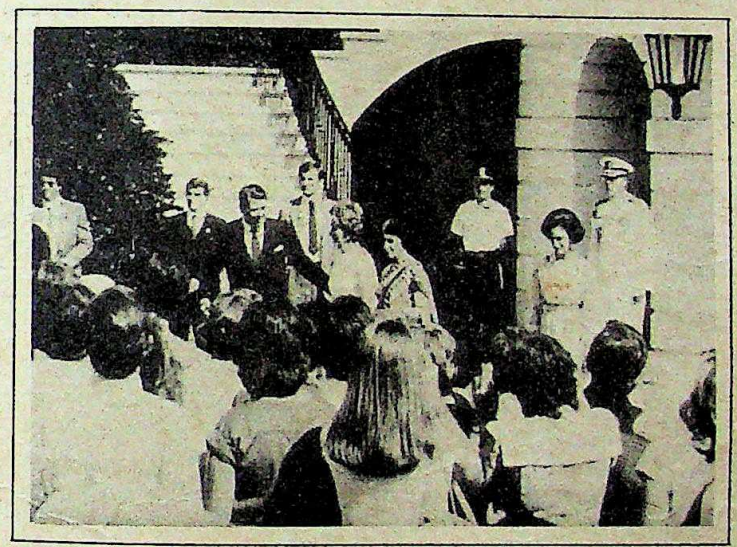
...eceived in New York by an assort... ...of dignitaries, including Ambassador ...Roosevelt, chief of protocol for the ...Government, the Indian Ambassador ...Narayanan and the US ...ssador to India, Harry G. ... Mrs Gandhi's indica... ...informality was instant... ...ent as she stepped off ...ane. Cordially patting a ...er's hand in the press en..., minutes after she step... ...American soil, she en...: "I'm delighted to be ...to see President Reagan ...and to see some of the ...can people, I hope."

...her black Cadillac, fly... ...oth the American and ...flags, whisked her off to ...te in the restrained ele... ...of the Carlyle Hotel on ...attan's fashionable ...Eastside, Mrs Gandhi ...mple time to savour the ...es of New York— ...ng four days in the city out of her ...day American tour.

...clusive Lunch: Almost her first public ...rance in the city was an unscheduled, ...ng spree at a reputed department ...(see box), followed by an exclusive ...for 55 hosted by the Metropolitan ...m (the Met). Chatting amiably to ...ies who included Zubin Mehta, con... ...of the New York Philharmonic ...tra, Diana Vreeland, high priestess of ..., the city's culture commissioner ...Geldzahler, as well as the heads of ...sia Society and the Indo-US Sub... ...sion, the occasion marked the offi... ...ction of the Met's 1985 exhibition ...d 'India!'

...he Met, which will present the major ...tion of Indian art from 1300–1900 ...e cooperation of the Indian Govern... ...has already been working on the ...for over a year. Says art historian ...Carey Welch, consultant to the Met in charge of assembling the best of the 300 Indian art objects that will be shown under one roof: "Our thought is to do a grand exhibition, choosing things from every tradition within the enormous continuum that characterises Indian culture borrowed from public and private collections in India, the US, Great Britain and Europe."

Rushing straight from the Metropolitan Museum lunch, she appeared relaxed in one of her flowered silk saris, as she dropped in for a 20-minute closed-door discussion with United Nations Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar at his 38th floor office in the United Nations building. The talk, vaguely described as a "general review of international problems in many parts of the world" by a spokesman, was followed by her presenting the UN with a 900-year- old stone representation of the Hindu god, Surya, a manifestation, she claimed, of "India's commitment to the United Nations".



Mrs Gandhi being welcomed at the White House: right foot forward

Fabulous Banquet: Later that afternoon, she flew off to Washington in the rain to official meetings with President Reagan and Secretary of State George P. Shultz. Surrounded by the rich panoply and perfection of a Presidential welcome, the high point of Mrs Gandhi's social success in the US came in the fabulous White House banquet hosted for her by the Reagans on July 29. Washington's society columnists called the evening the "most elaborate entertainment to date in the Reagan White House"—dinner and dancing for 116 people with unique finale: a special concert by Indian conductor Zubin Mehta conducting 60 musicians of the New York Philharmonic in the Rose Garden.

Received by the President and the First Lady on the north side of the White House—other guests arrived on the south side—the Indian prime minister, in a textured raspberry silk sari looked simplicity itself in comparison to Nancy Reagan, who as a special gesture wore a sari-inspired, peach-coloured one-shoulder dress trimmed in silver and designed by her favourite designer Adolfo.

As the President and prime minister slowly descended the White House's Grand Staircase to the trumpets sounding 'Ruffles and Flourishes', they followed a colour guard to the East Room where the guests had assembled to be introduced in a receiving line. Among them were two former American ambassadors to India, Ellsworth Bunker and John Sherman Cooper; former ambassador to Italy Clare Booth Luce; S. Dillon Ripley, head of the Smithsonian Institution, the novelist John Updike as well as a distinguished team of academics and intellectuals.

Long Preparation: In an interview with *The New York Times*, Nancy Reagan admitted that she had been involved in preparing the evening since April, when the Indian prime minister accepted the American visit. In fact, she had approached conductor Zubin Mehta for the concert through their common friend Frank Sinatra. Said she: "I try very hard to mix people up, to have guests from the business world, the arts, sports, education and old friends, because I think that's what makes an evening fun and interesting for everyone."

Even the menu obtained her final approval. Bathed in candlelight, the guests sat at tables in the State Dining Room to go through a four-course dinner that included seafood neptune, lamb in golden pastry, salad and French cheese and a frozen black cheery bombe accompanied by a choice of Californian wines. After dinner the guests attended the musical concert following which the Indian prime minister left. But champagne and dancing followed in the flower-filled Grand Foyer, glittering with crystal chandeliers and mirrors.

The end of her Washington visit was marked by the usual exchange of gifts between the two families: President Reagan received a Kashmiri carpet showing a hunting scene and Nancy Reagan a gold silk sari. The Reagans gave Mrs Gandhi a silver shell box reproduced from colonial Williamsburg, Audubon prints of American birds

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SHOPPING

Side Tracking

RONNIE Stern, general manager of New York's exclusive department store Bonwit Teller, was attending a corporate meeting in a nearby building when the store opened for business on July 28. She was hastily recalled to the store by an unexpected phone call from the Secret Service who announced that, within minutes, the Indian prime minister would make an unscheduled visit to Bonwit's. Catering to VIPs even on normal days, Bonwit's got its act together to produce an interpreter "who'd speak Hindu (*sic*), Mrs Gandhi's language," as Stern readied herself to escort the prime minister around the store.

Somewhat crestfallen when she heard Mrs Gandhi's "Oxford English", Stern led Mrs Gandhi and a turbanned Sonia through the shoe department where Mrs Gandhi looked at sandals, but did not buy any. Followed by numerous secret service men, they went through "Intimate Apparel" where Stern personally waited on Mrs Gandhi. The purchases? A dressing gown and a long slip. The next stop was at the cosmetics counter to buy a mascara.

Fantasy Floor: "Then, as a personal favour to me," Stern told INDIA TODAY in a telephone interview, "Mrs Gandhi who was rushed for time and had come to the store in-between meetings, graciously agreed to go through our sixth floor designer clothes and fur department." Bonwit's showplace, this is a fantasy floor that is architecturally exciting with its pyramid-like structure and its skylights. All through her store visit, Mrs Gandhi consulted closely with Sonia and her purchases were paid for by "two Indian men".

She bought so little that she gave the impression she had not come to shop. "She seemed to be looking at the store culturally," Stern said. "The few things she did buy seemed like very specific necessities." By total coincidence, a team from *Women's Wear Daily*—the Bible of the American well-dressed woman—happened to be in Bonwit's that morning working on another story. They were naturally thrilled to cover Mrs Gandhi, as was *The New York Times* whose photographer had been tipped off by Stern herself in the few minutes she had to prepare for the visit. Consequently, there was much excitement in the store even though it was too early in the morning for regular shoppers.

Sonia with Mrs Gandhi: a "cultural" interest

"We've had many heads of state—celebrities galore come into our store," Stern said. "But I found Mrs Gandhi very charming—I really liked her. Before she left, I gave her a symbolic gift—a Bonwit's umbrella, printed with the spray of violets that is our insignia." Most appropriate, considering it was beginning to pour outside. In a city full of fine department stores, Mrs Gandhi's choice of Bonwit's was endorsed by an elegant native New Yorker: "Bonwit's is more classy than the others—it never advertises sales and its merchandise is more conservative than trendy." A sentiment that could sum up Mrs Gandhi herself!

—VIBHUTI PATEL

with Reagan's personal signature
bon-designed serving spoons in a
and a silver frame with Reagan's
personally signed and embossed
Presidential seal. Rajiv Gandhi
crystal bowl by Cartier on a wood
with the President's seal. Sonia, his
presented a rainbow-rose Boehm
and her children, Rahul and Priyank
each with inscriptions by the Pres
the First Lady respectively.

Close Encounters: Returning
York on July 31, Mrs Gandhi amaz
Yorkers by immersing herself in a
gruelling meetings with America
Indians residing in America from all
life. Starting with an encounter with
of office-bearers of the numerou
ciations of Indians settled in the
ending with a tea party to meet
American women, Mrs Gandhi
exhaustive two days in the city, ta
off for two theatre shows.

Typically, her style varied fro
to group. Sternly admonishing the
groups, she snapped at them in scho
fashion: "It is indeed unfortunate th
rever Indians are, instead of form
strong Indian organisation, you ha
dreds of separate groups." Even sha
her claim that "the Indian commu
road is not standing up for India.
nothing to be ashmed of. You only
see our statistics and see how impres
have progressed".

LATER in the afternoon, she tu
attention to a group of scie
Indian origin who had flo
NewYork from all over the US to
their desire to aid development of
and technology in India. The meeting
was closed to the press, was held
the stewardship of Dr M.S. Swam
(formerly of the Planning Commis
now director-general of the Rice
Institute in Manila). Discussions
meeting revolved round the creati
Indo-US joint panel on science a
nology transfers and, specifically, th
up of a demonstration-cum-traini
housed in a "Technology City" f
the Indian Government will provi
acres of land, water, electricity a
facilities. The city will be set up wi
funds to be released for develop
additional support will be sought
American private sector. Already,
house Corporation has agreed to
project.

Her meeting with Indian scie
followed by another closed-door
with Indian businessmen, wh
Gandhi personally encouraged t
pond with her secretariat in N

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TYPICAL of the manner in which Mrs Gandhi can captivate a foreign audience, as much by her political barbs as by sudden personal revelations, were the words in which she described herself after receiving the U Thant Award in New York. She suddenly let the mask slip as she discussed her public and private persona saying...

Mrs Gandhi at a presentation ceremony at the UN

Professor Buultjens also said that much has been written about me. I differ. Many, many words have been written but they've been written about some person whom I don't recognise at all. I don't know who she is or where these people have met her because she certainly isn't anywhere within me. I am somebody quite different and whether that person will be discovered or not, I don't know and frankly, I don't really care. What is important is that that person is there, and it is that person who exists, and who has nothing to do with being in power or out, having a victory or a defeat. The person that is in the core of each one of us welcomes any experience and tries to use that experience for an inner strength, to build up the inner resources, to build up the inner calm, which I think, is the message of most religions.

their particular pro-. She discussed possibi- of increasing exports to ia in the way of elec- and software goods, and ded very favourably to roup's offer to raise equity in dollars for Maruti.

Dashing off in the evening ch up with a Broadway *Agnes of God* starring award-winning actress da Plummer, Mrs Gan- maintained an unflappable when a crisis erupted mid- mance. In the show's last minutes, sudden groans in dience led to speculation an assassination attempt e prime minister had been But it turned out that a er of the audience had d a heart attack and had be carried out. The play ed after the actress took minutes to regain her sure but Mrs Gandhi sat completely unruffled e incident, later going ge to greet a thrilled

t morning, which was y, she donned a crimson -kameez to visit a guru- in an Indian-dominated n of Queens and returned quiet private lunch with friend, Dorothy Cou- Changing into an elegant gh, she spend the after- nce again at the theatre, e to catch a matinee of the popular and rather play about 18th century er Mozart called *Ama-*

ard: Her last day in New began early, with a small and private y at her hotel where she received the ous U Thant Award for promoting understanding between the East and t. Named after the third secretary- of the United Nations, the award sented by Sri Lankan economist r Ralph Buultjens, on behalf of the Committee. He explained that it g presented to Mrs Gandhi in her capacity, not as prime minister a, its earlier recipients being such ished world leaders like Professor Toynbee, Dr S. Radhakrishnan, Stevenson and Lester Pearson. r next engagement was of an al- different kind. Calling on the city's l Mayor, Ed Koch, she was forced to apply her evasive diplomatic skills. When Koch politely enquired of her whether there were any Jews in India and whether Israel had an embassy in New Delhi, Mrs Gandhi, exercising crucial tact, replied: "No, but they have a consul who is not there right now. The individual may be different, but there is a consulate." Koch presented her with an expensive Steuben glass apple—"symbolic of our city which is popularly known as the Big Apple"—to which she responded with a gift of a rosewood box inlaid with an ivory Taj Mahal.

Canny Replies: At a huge luncheon in her honour held at the Waldorf-Astoria, hosted by the Foreign Policy Association in cooperation with The Asia Society, the Far Eastern American Council of Commerce and Industry and the Indian Chamber of Commerce of America, Mrs Gandhi summed up the state of the Indian nation flooring the 1,500 guests—who had paid $40 (Rs 360) per ticket—with her canny fielding of questions. Former ambassador to India Robert Goheen, who read out the questions written down by members of the audience, asked: "What do you think is a permanent solution to the Kashmir problem?" With great élan, Mrs Gandhi retorted: "Problem? What problem? We don't see a problem there at all."

Informal Tea: Her last scheduled meeting in New York, before she took off for a day's halt each in Los Angeles and Honolulu, was an informal tea, called at her own request to meet leading American women. Hosted by the Indian ambassador's wife, Mrs Narayanan, the 30 women were placed at small tables for five each with an empty chair at each table for Mrs Gandhi to join the groups at random. Among the women were the doyenne of modern dance Martha Graham, Eleanor Smeal, president of the National Organisation of Women, Ellen Futter, president of Barnard College, Ruth Heineman of the League of Women Voters, novelist Bette Bau Lord and editors Joan Freseman (of *The Asia Magazine*) and Charlotte Curtis (of the Op-Ed pages of *The New York Times*.)

Reporters were neither invited nor allowed at the meeting, described as a "private event", where Mrs Gandhi moved from table to table receiving information, though the exchange of views inevitably turned to the status of women in India. Said Joan Freseman of her impressions of Mrs Gandhi at the meeting: "She's refined and chiselled-looking and, when she speaks, she's very convincing. Unless you know differently, you want to believe her."

That was typical of the impression Mrs Gandhi left behind on America's east Coast where she spent most of her visit. Her directness of approach, combined with her obvious warmth and candour, took most Americans by surprise—they may know otherwise but for the extent of her visit they wanted to believe her.

—MADHU TREHAN and VIBHUTI PATEL

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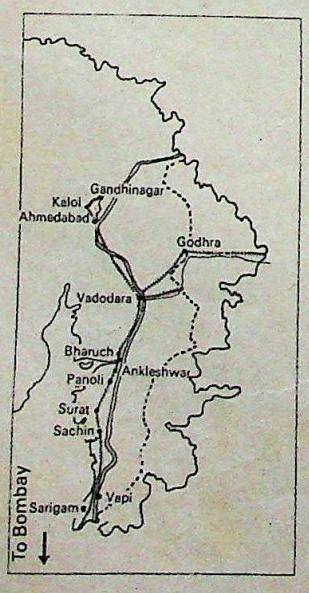

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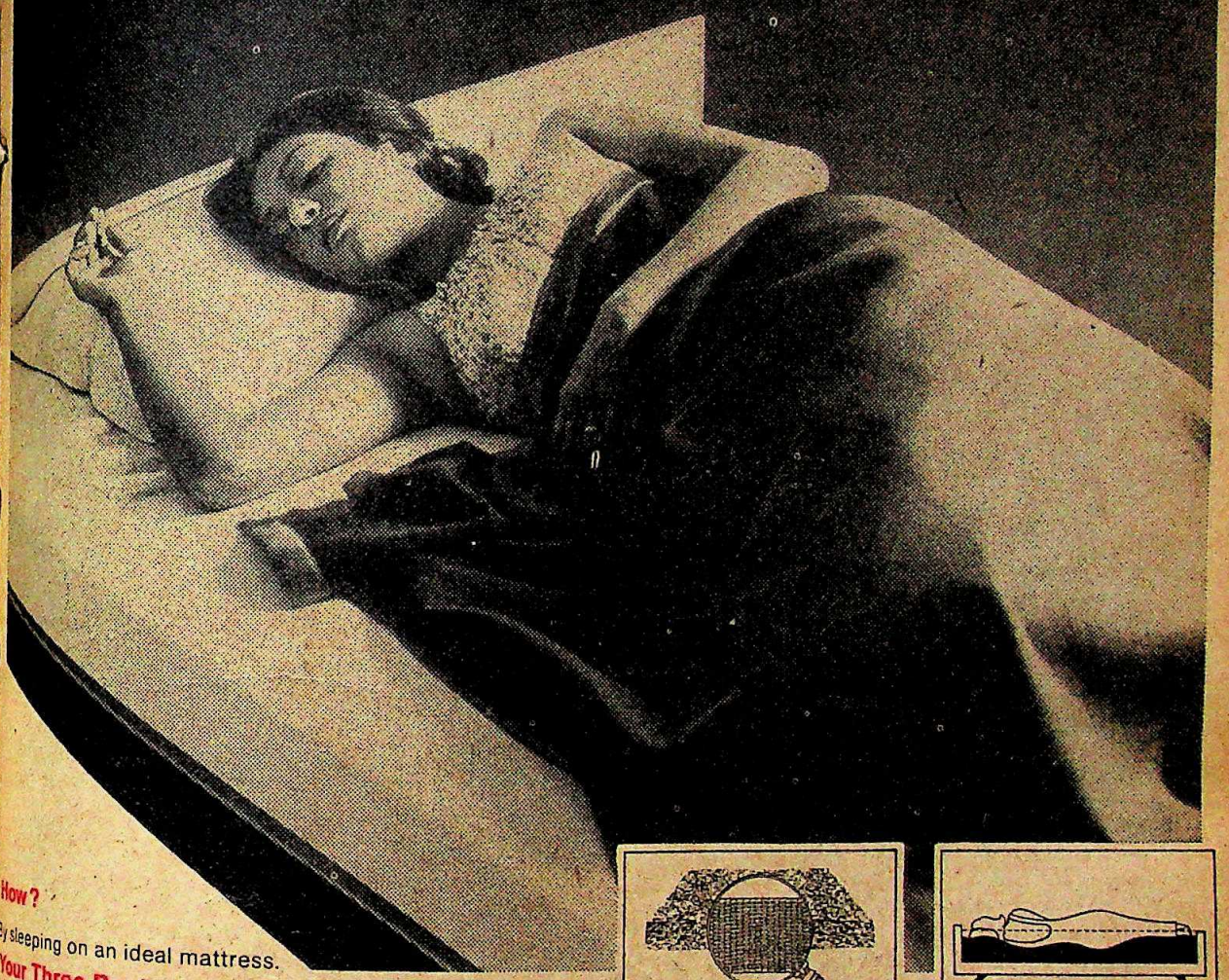

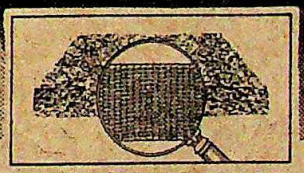

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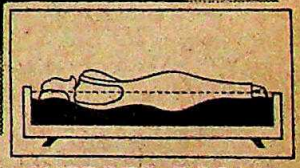

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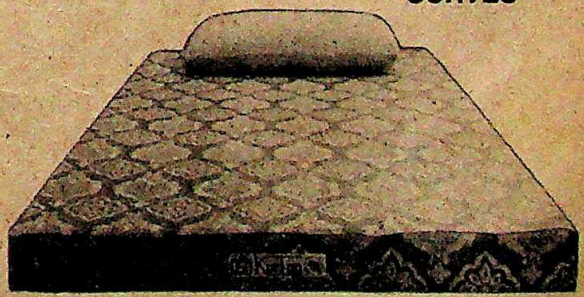

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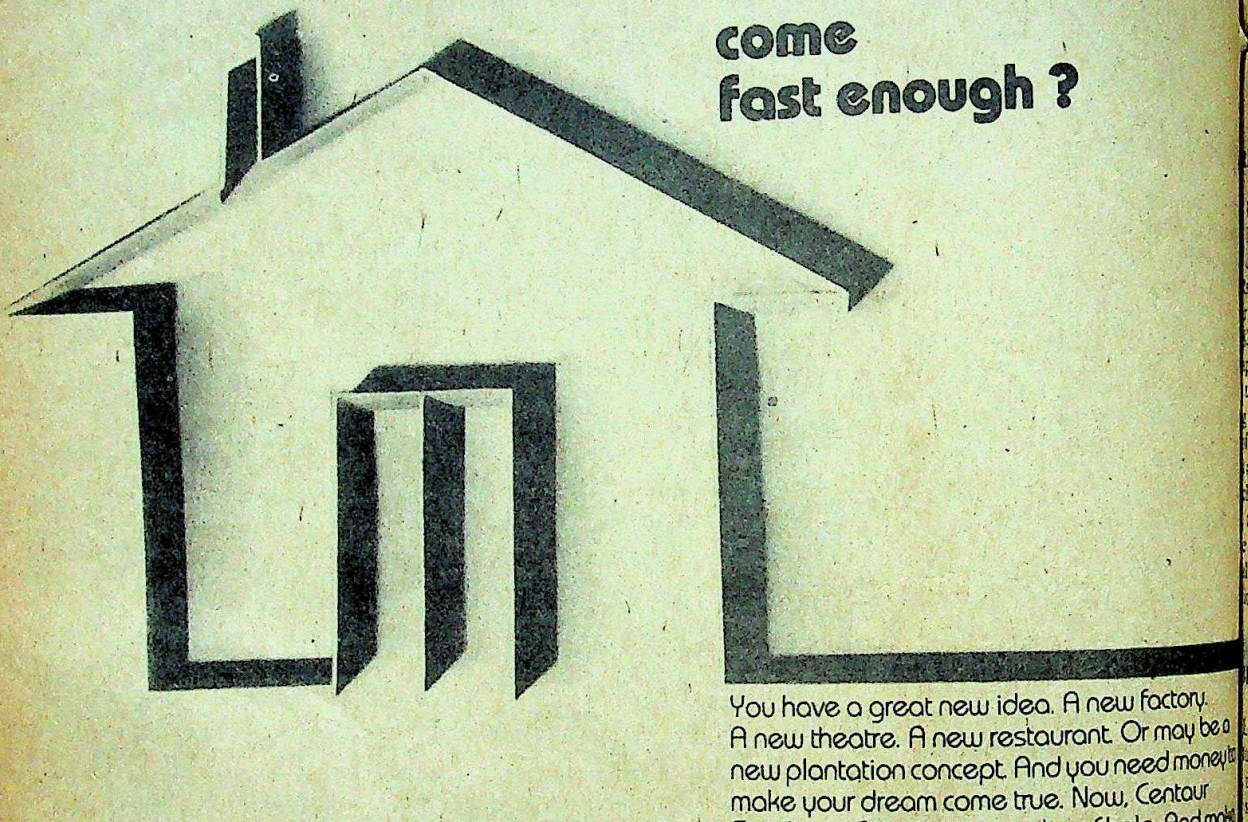

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SURPASSING THE SWISS

AMERICAN banks are trying to break the Swiss banks' monopoly on secret accounts, believed to be held abroad by many wealthy Indians. A senior representative of a major American bank was in the country recently, trying to persuade businessmen and industrialists to shift their unaccounted money from numbered accounts in Switzerland to banks in the US. His persuasive argument was two-fold: that American banks can now offer the same secrecy guaranteed by Swiss banks, and that deposits in the US will fetch much better returns because of the high interest rates prevailing in that country. The Government is, however, aware of the US banker's visit and his discussions with industrialists, but what action it will (or can) take is as yet unknown.

E FOR THEIR MONEY

ELYING the occasional reports of the capital market boom losing momentum, new issues of shares and convertible debentures continue to meet with a good response. No less Rs 300 crore was raised through new issues in the April–June r—more than half what was raised in all four quarters of 2. With nine months in the year still to go, it is already certain pital raised from the public this year will be substantially than last year's all-time record of over Rs 500 crore, thus the Cassandras wrong. The boom has extended to the Unit f India, which has raised a flattering Rs 63 crore in 60 days new unit scheme that promises a guaranteed dividend. Only ax-touted capital investment bonds seem to be doing relatively though official figures are not available. But it is expected e sales of these bonds will pick up towards the end of the l year, since investment at even that stage will ensure ms for the current year from the wealth and gift taxes.

LE STANDARDS

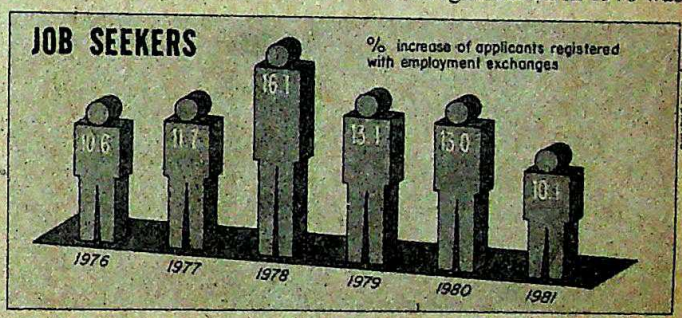
LL THE commotion caused by computer giant IBM's depar-re from India some years ago may have been quite nnecessary. IBM left because it said it would not reduce its shareholding, as directed by the Government under the Exchange Regulations Act. The company's argument—as in of Coca-Cola—had been that global corporate policy would them dilute US shareholding. But now, according to tion received by the Government, IBM has done elsewhere efused to do in India. It has diluted its shareholding in both ed Mexico.

GOING

REE new projects are now being pursued by the Modi roup. M.K. Modi has proposed a Rs 40 crore nylon tyre rd project, in collaboration with Unitika of Japan; a Rs e-bearing project in Haryana, which the state Government is y keen on; and a Rs 50 crore graphite electrode project in adesh, with the state Government holding a part of the et another project, linked to the coming up of Maruti ill be to manufacture wheels and wheel rims for cars, with crore plant likely to be in Rajasthan. The proposals are still ial stages, but first priority is likely to be for the nylon tyre ect, for which the foreign collaboration has already been Meanwhile, D.K. Modi plans to use a letter of intent for rming benzene hexachloride, using the chlorine by-product roup's caustic soda plant coming up in Alwar, Rajasthan.

THE LENGTHENING QUEUE

IS THE unemployment situation getting better? Unfortunately not; it is only worsening at a slower rate! The number of job applicants registered with the employment exchanges went up by only 10.1 per cent in 1981, down from 13 per cent in 1980 and 16.1 per cent in 1978. However, the increase in registrations in 1976 was



only 10.6 per cent. So, in a sense all that has happened is that the ground lost since then and till 1978 has now been recovered. Fresh registrations with the employment exchanges during 1981 totalled 6.3 million, while placements through the exchanges numbered a paltry 0.5 million. Altogether, over 17.6 million job-seekers are now registered with the employment exchanges—80 per cent higher than the level five years earlier.

PURPOSEFUL REDUCTION

VIJAYANAGAR in Karnataka may not finally get the conventional integrated steel plant for which Mrs Gandhi laid a foundation-stone 11 years ago. Instead, the area will most likely get a smaller steel plant based on either of two new technologies: the direct reduction process or the as yet unproven plasma technology (which itself has two variants). Steel experts are in favour of these because Vijayanagar is far away from any source of coking coal, required in the conventional steel-making process but not in either of the new technologies. The direct reduction process is already being adopted for joint sector projects in Orissa and Bihar, and involves much lower investment costs and a shorter gestation period than a conventional steel plant. The advantage in the plasma technology is, among other things, the very low use of power and the possibility of making high-value special steels as an end-product and earning higher profits. Whichever new technology is adopted, the plant will not be of the size of Vizag or Daitari (3 million tonnes each), and may stop short of around a million tonnes. Meanwhile, steel experts are finalising the technical specifications for the Daitari project. When this is over in October, a global tender is likely to be floated for equipment supplies.

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ATOMIC ENERGY

High Hopes, Little Power

THE ANNOUNCEMENT of the compromise on fuel supply for Tarapur has lifted a load from the minds of the country's atomic scientists, permitting as it does the full operation of India's first nuclear power station. Unfortunately, however, this by no means signifies an end to the numerous other problems plaguing the country's ambitious atomic energy programme.

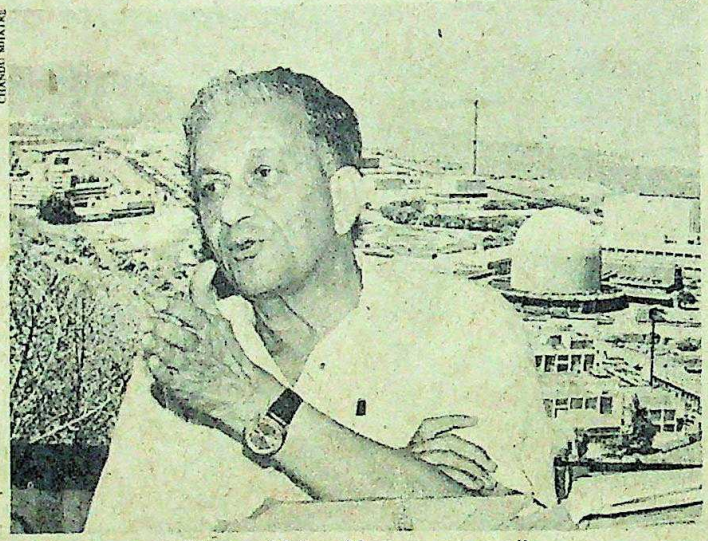
At the only other nuclear power station commissioned so far, the Rajasthan Atomic Power Project (RAPP) near Kota, there is little room for cheer. The first unit at RAPP has been closed more or less continuously since late October last year, and was in fact inoperative for all of 209 days in 1981. This year will obviously be no better. The average capacity utilisation has been around 25 per cent, a record which critics say is by far the worst in the world.

The second unit in Rajasthan (RAPP-II) has done significantly better after it was commissioned in April 1981, but this too has had more than its share of problems, with a closure every three weeks or so and a capacity utilisation of around 44 per cent—less than what is required to make it fully viable.

Infrastructural Hitch: The heavy water programme, crucial to nuclear power generation since no power station ... natural uranium can start without ... quantity of heavy water, is in a ... first 235 MW unit of the Madra... Power Project (MAPP-I), near Kalp... has been ready for several months ... not start working before March ... because there is no heavy water. T... heavy water plants in ... have been doing p... poorly—capacity uti... Baroda has been 21 p... at Tuticorin 24 per c... the small Nangal plan... for three months late... because no power ... able. Two other pro... should have been co... ed five years ago are ... on stream.

Almost every p... atomic energy has be... rably delayed raising ... the process to levels ... those initially envisag... II was due to be ... in 1973, but finally ... stream last year—e... late. MAPP-I was also ... completed in 1973, b...

CHANDU MHATRE



Sethna: "doing things on our own"

TARAPUR

Ending An Atomic War

THE TARAPUR compromise, announced during Mrs Gandhi's visit to the United States, has been greeted with general relief. This is not only because a thorn in bilateral relations has been pulled out and the power station north of Bombay can now hope to work normally but also because the compromise manages to protect the basic stand taken by both sides.

It is, in a sense, an ingenious compromise: India has not accepted the full-scope safeguards on all its nuclear installations, demanded by the Americans since 1978, when the US Congress passed the tough Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act; and the Americans have avoided backing out of their basic commitment on fuel supply, and at the same time avoided violating the provisions of their 1978 law since the supplies of fuel will be from France and not the US.

But the new arrangement leaves other issues still to be sorted out, including the crucial question of the right to reprocess spent fuel from Tarapur. Such reprocessing yields plutonium which, if not under effective safeguards, can be used for making atomic bombs. India insists that it has the right to go ahead and reprocess on its own, but the US stand amounts to demanding an effective American veto on reprocessing. Indian diplomats suggest that the US stand is untenable, and that even the Americans know this, but others were betting that this could well become a more contentious issue than the original question of fuel supply.

Stepping Down: The more immediate question, however, was whether India has compromised on the stand it took during the protracted negotiations last year on fuel supplies. For, in essence, the broad pattern of the current compromise had been suggested by the US over a year ago—and re... by India. India's negotiators, ... Gonsalves of the Ministry of Ex... Affairs and Homi Sethna of ... Department of Atomic Energy, had ... replied that if the US did not provi... fuel, it was effectively backing out ... obligations under the 1963 pact, and ... India was quite capable of ... alternative sources of fuel on its ...

The package now agreed to ... sents a clear retreat from this ... though Indian diplomats deny ... also not clear what safeguard ter... French will demand in return for ... ing partially enriched uranium ... Foreign Minister Claude Ch... merely said at his press conference ... Delhi last fortnight that the ... safeguards of the International A... Energy Agency and those in the ... agreement would apply. But this ... fully clarify matters, since the ... agreement itself is subject to ... interpretations and, in fact, ... a specific reference to the differe... tions of the Indian and US gover...

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missioned. MAPP-II, due to be opera- in 1976, will now take till 1984. st unit of the Narora Atomic Power (NAPP-I), work on which started in was due to be commissioned last year ld not provide power before 1986–87. h scheduled to be operational this is now slated for commissioning in 8. And there is no certainty that there be any further delays.

e cost increases match the delays in schedules. RAPP-I was initially to cost crore, but finally ended up at Rs 73 RAPP-II costs went up similarly, from crore to Rs 103 crore. The cost of has escalated from Rs 62 crore to Rs crore, and MAPP-II from Rs 71 Rs 200 crore. Project costs at Narora ken in comparable fashion. Taken , according to a rough estimate, energy projects across the country en in cost by over Rs 400 crore

Escalation: Smaller projects have from the same disease. A research project at Bombay that was due to missioned in 1979 will now have to 1984, while costs have gone up from crore to an estimated Rs 80 crore. l waste immobilisation project at was due to be completed in 1980 yet ready, and costs have gone up 4 crore to Rs 7 crore. The con- of a fast-breeder test reactor, to the long-term future of India's power programme because of the planned shift to fast-breeder technology, has been delayed by seven years, while costs have more than doubled to Rs 64 crore. The cost escalation of a ball-bearing tubes plant has been around 150 per cent, and the delay around three years. The list is almost endless.

The end result has been quite scandalous. Homi Bhabha, the visionary father of the country's atomic energy programme, had envisaged an atomic power capacity of 8,000 MW by 1980–81. This was scaled down by his successor, Vikram Sarabhai, to 2,700 MW, and then lowered yet again to 1,240 MW. Instead, what the country now has is 860 MW—less than 11 per cent of the original target—and little actual power emerges from this capacity. There is little doubt that the country would have got far better returns if the investment of money and effort had been made instead in hydel or thermal power.

As if all this weren't bad enough, the atomic energy establishment has been repeatedly accused of violating basic safety guide-lines, and exposing workers to dangerously excessive levels of radiation. A report on RAPP pointed out that the power station was flouting basic technical rules, and reported that the radioactivity in the reactor building was nine times more than the prescribed limit during October last year. Critics have alleged that the Tarapur station is the most contaminated in the world, and American consumerist Ralph Nader recently added to the chorus of protest by expressing his concern.

There have also been recurring mishaps in atomic installations: an explosion at the giant Nuclear Fuel Complex (NFC) in Hyderabad last year blew up an entire building, and another at the heavy water plant in Baroda rocked the plant to its foundations, leading to a two-year closure. Labour disputes at the various installations have been another headache, with one strike at Kota in 1977–78 lasting all of 280 days and causing several lasting problems for RAPP-II, which was at a crucial stage of installation. There have also been reports of disillusionment among the 5,000 scientists working for the Department of Atomic Energy.

IT IS not an easy record to defend, but Homi Sethna, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, does his best. "The extent of progress in nuclear power does not depend wholly on the Department of Atomic Energy," he says, and points to the limitations of Indian industry in producing heavy engineering equipment to fine tolerances and exacting specification. Supplies could not in many cases be arranged from abroad because of the restrictions slapped on by the nuclear power countries, who have ganged up at what is known as the "London club" to insist on safeguards as a condition for supplies. There have been other domestic problems as well: funds were a constraint during the Janata regime, and key personnel have left for better-paying jobs. Above all, however, says Sethna: "We have been going

The last Indo-US talks on Tarapur: an ingenious compromise

the subject. There is no clear answer as to ther French uranium be subject to down- am safeguards, as in case of plutonium pro- d from reprocessed apur fuel being used he Kalpakkam fast- er test reactor. These ontentious issues, and ntent of India's re- from its position last will become clear when the outstanding s are sorted out.

Sethna offers no com- on anything to do Tarapur, but it is known that he was in of abrogating the agreement on ground of US non-compliance, and opting for an independent course action using indigenously available el oxide fuel. A recommendation to effect is believed to have gone to the last November. The Americans had then responded with a number of threats about cutting off aid, opposing World Bank loans to India, and cutting off credits from the US Exim bank.

It was obvious that any Indian announcement of a break-off would have plunged the two countries into an unprecedented bilateral cold war. Either in response to these warnings, or following a calculation of broader diplomatic initiatives, the Government decided soon after against abrogating the agreement, and has now gone in for the current compromise.

Official spokesmen, meanwhile, dismiss the mixed oxide fuel option as too expensive, only a short-term solution that cannot last more than five years (because only that much fuel is available); and unwise because India needs to preserve its plutonium (which goes into mixed oxide) for its all important future fast breeder reactor programme. This logic is unassailable, but it effectively wipes off the entire Rs 35 crore spent in developing the mixed oxide option over the last few years.

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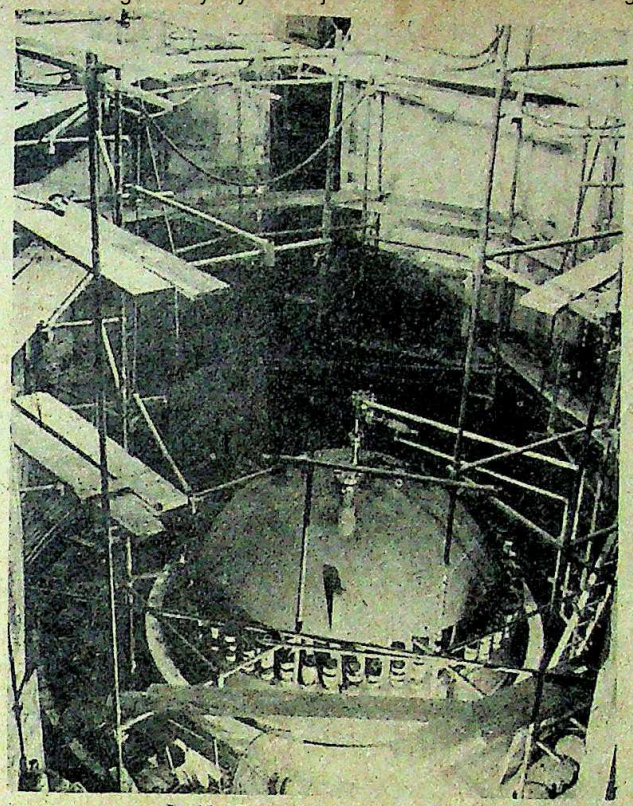
gh a process of learning, ac- g capabilities to do things on wn." Sethna also flatly denies s safety record is poor, and t the kind of explosions that occurred are common in the ical industry.

Many of the major installations been of an experimental . RAPP-I was built when nei- e Canadian consultants nor scientists had sufficient ex- e. And some of the heavy Plants have been exercised ly in mastering new tech- Perhaps inevitably, mistakes e, calculations went awry, signs had to be modified. The atomic energy programme has ently got off to a very halt- rt. It is possible to say that rning process has lasted too charge that would be difficult e. But the gains have not been ential: India is now one of countries with the ability to the full nuclear cycle, from g mining and extracting m, and fabricating nuclear producing heavy water, build- ctors and reprocessing the el. More than 90 per cent of a nuclear ation is now indigenous, and senior scientists claim that India now has ogies and abilities that even some ed nuclear powers do not have.

thna points to the experience with and RAPP-II to explain how difficult rning process has been, and it is a that brings out vividly the kind of es that have bedevilled the entire power programme. RAPP-I, built by adians, started out with basic design because even the Canadians did not e experience in building a plant of So much of the development work e in India, at India's cost. The design rbines had to be acquired from because the Canadians did not have w-how, but these failed repeatedly. RAPP-I and RAPP-II, the turbine ve had to be changed because they ed wrong, because the fastened re too slack and led to vibrations, e they were made too stiff. In one ng valves were fitted, and in an- e was—incredibly enough—sand dental bearings on which the turbine d. Someone had not cleaned out e. Stagnant water in another part of led to severe corrosion.

Recurring Problems: Then there were g leaks of both light and heavy gging the leaking tubes meant g reducing the capacity of RAPP-II,



Inside Tarapur: heavy weather

and various attempts at stopping other leaks failed. The heavy water leakage was well above anticipated levels, causing a shortage of a scarce commodity. And if everything else was all right, the northern regional power grid was too unstable for the plant to operate. Sethna says a good number of the 170 times (250, according to a private count) that the plant has had to be shut down was because of grid constraints.

Sethna argues that much of the fault for all this lay with the foreign consultants, and admits that his own men were not experienced enough to ensure that things were done properly. Yet the fact remains that a similar plant of comparable vintage has performed infinitely better abroad. Neither Sethna nor other senior atomic scientists like to admit it, but the fact is also that the nuclear power programme has become a major casualty of the atomic blast at Pokharan in May 1974. Canada, which till then had been cooperating in a major way in the nuclear programme, walked out of all manner of contractual obligations and refused to have anything more to do with India's atomic programme. The international climate as a whole became infinitely worse for any sort of help required, and of course fuel supplies to Tarapur began to get delayed.

The Canadians walked out of RAPP at a critical stage, leaving it to Sethna's men to handle the problems they left behind. They refused to provide the heavy water needed to start up RAPP-II, and the country had therefore to make use of its own heavy water. As one result of this, MAPP-I now has no heavy water for starting operations. Heavy water has also had to be imported from the Soviet Union, on stiffer safeguard terms than had been agreed upon with the Canadians, who had also walked out on the Kota heavy water project—which was delayed by two years as a direct consequence. Equipment orders for MAPP were similarly reneged upon, and fresh orders had to be placed. Sethna says this alone meant delaying the project by five years. Consultants had to be changed midway through projects, and the NFC which processes the Tarapur fuel received from the US, has been operating at 20 per cent capacity and less because of the absence of fuel. Now, the spare parts needed urgently for the Tarapur plant are not being cleared by the US Government.

Doubtful Gains: Almost none of this would have happened if it were not for the Pokharan blast, which in any case has not led to any new peaceful uses of nuclear energy—the proclaimed reason for the blast. But N. Srinivasan, chief executive of the heavy water programme, argues that while the Pokharan fall-out has been damaging, it has nevertheless forced the country to do things on its own, and to learn in the process.

The crucial question for the future is whether the learning process is finally over, and whether the nuclear power programme can be expected to gather some badly needed momentum. The target for the end of the century is 10,000 MW of nuclear power capacity, and even by official reckoning only 2,270 MW will be installed by 1991. That leaves 7,730 MW for the last nine years—and a target of that size must inevitably invite a series of question marks, none of which is likely to be easily resolved.

Sethna is mildly cautious about saying that the target will be achieved, and there already seems to be some re-scheduling of the programme for shifting to 500 MW sets from the present 235 MW sets. But both he and Srinivasan insist that technologies have been mastered to a great extent, and that the future will be better than the past.

If they are right, the price paid till now will have been worth it. If not, the atomic energy establishment will without question be the country's biggest and most expensive white elephant.

—T.N. NINAN with PRABHU CHAWLA

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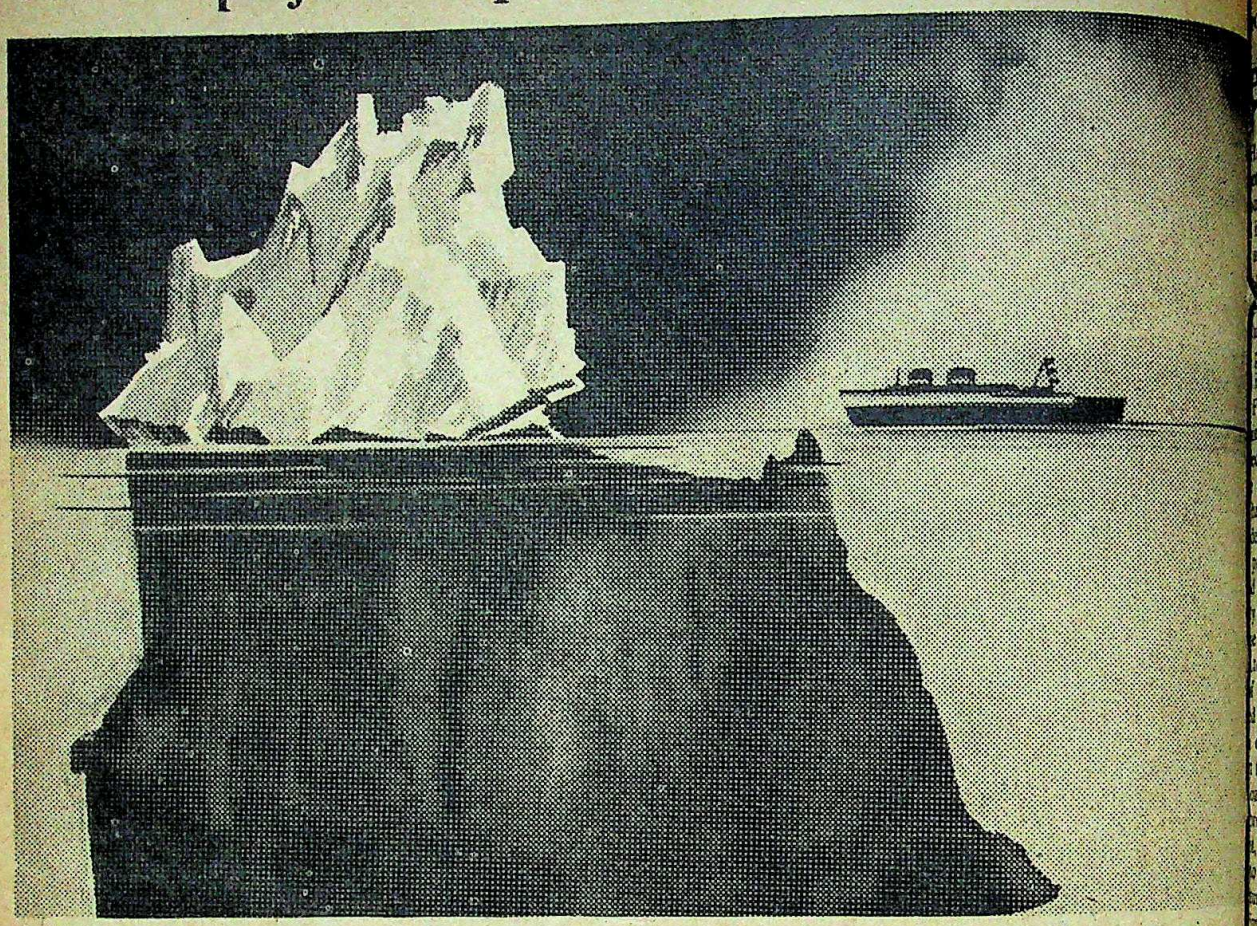

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C SECTOR

eturn For The Better

HAS been a spectacular turn-around: r four successive years of heavy and ming losses, the public sector has n handsome profits in 1981-82, esti- at a record Rs 403 crore—more than he previous highest profit figure of crore in 1976–77.

merous other records have been set rocess: the return on capital em- is an unprecedented 11.6 per cent— Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee rned is better than the 11.4 per cent ed by the largest 101 companies in the sector a year earlier. Companies ave unceasingly suffered losses for a decade without a break have suddenly profits, while a number of units have new production peaks and set ilisation records.

e Steel Authority of td (SAIL), with a turn- Rs 3,000 crore, has a record capacity uti- of 78 per cent, and is to hit 89 per cent this al India, another giant, roved production by 9 , raised capacity utili- a record 90 per cent, rned a profit for the e in its nine-year Capacity utilisation is d to hit 93 per cent this

ttering Figures: The repeated down the line: Heavy Electricals Ltd has improved its turn- per cent to Rs 930 crore, its are up 42 per cent at rore. HMT, another star er, has raised its 40 per cent to Rs 270 d net profit is up 75 per Rs 35 crore. The on of telephone instru- s risen 42 per cent to and the Indian Tele- dustries (IT) has boost- enue by 83 per cent to rore. Another Banga- ed unit, Hindustan ies Ltd (HAL), has oduction 70 per cent 35 per cent, while up 700 per cent, to Rs

e would be flattering r any company any- t for a public sector with a sorry image, bedevilled by all manner of constraints, frequently accused of low capacity utilisation, and seen by most as a non-performer, it is almost a case of redeeming a broken promise.

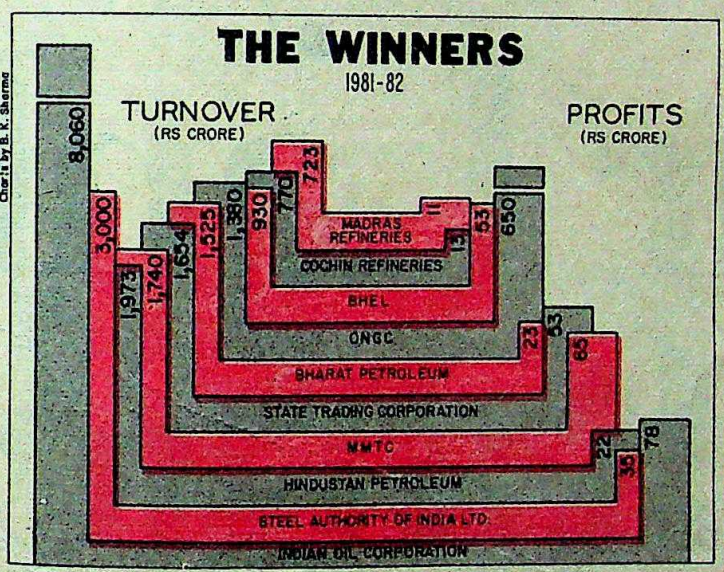
Coal India has surpassed its production target for the first time in its history, and even a departmentally-run organisation like the railways has substantially exceeded its freight movement target. Partly reflecting the ambitious expansion programme, crude oil production is up 43 per cent, steel 21 per cent, nitrogenous fertiliser 47 per cent, cement 78 per cent, and the manufacture of capital goods between 16 and 66 per cent. Overall, capacity utilisation has improved sharply in most sectors.

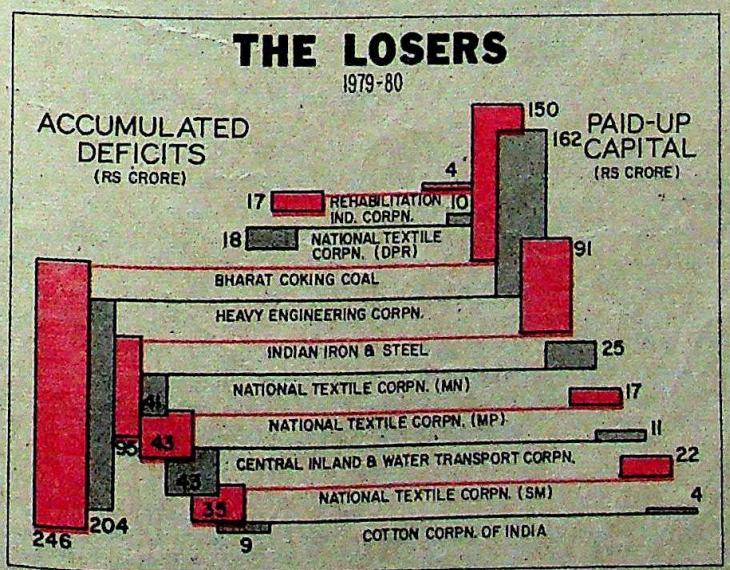
Even the laggard companies are beginning to show potential. The Durgapur-based Mining and Allied Machinery Corporation (MAMC) has allegedly attained only 40 per cent capacity utilisation, but has nevertheless stepped up equipment production from 12,800 to 18,950 tonnes—a rise of over 55 per cent. The Ranchi-based Heavy Engineering Corporation (HEC), another sick giant, has now got three times more orders than it had two years ago and has reduced losses. This year, it hopes to make a profit for the first time in recent memory. Bharat Aluminium, another key unit with an abysmally low level of capacity utilisation, has nevertheless stepped up production by close to 25 per cent, to around 35,000 tonnes.

The general uptrend has been maintained in the new year. In the first quarter (April-June) of 1982–83, sales of the central public sector units were up by a further 25 per cent over the corresponding quarter of last year, and crossed Rs 9,000 crore—reflecting a sharp improvement in physical output: in lignite by 14 per cent, copper by 60 per cent, aluminium by 42 per cent, petroleum by 35 per cent, iron ore by 24 per cent, cement by 36 per cent, and so on down the line. There were other sectors which were still falling behind—steel production for instance in the first quarter was down by 5 per cent because of severe power shortages at both Bhilai and Rourkela. But overall, the encouraging performance of last year has been sustained and built upon.

Mukherjee has fixed a target of 10 per cent higher productivity for the public sector as a whole in 1982–83, and by current indications the target should be reached. Inevitably, this is reflected in profits, which in the first quarter totalled Rs 135 crore. If this trend is maintained over the remaining three quarters, profits over the year as a whole could climb to around Rs 600 crore—a level unimaginable two years ago, when the public sector as a whole had registered an all-time high loss of Rs 182 crore.

Price Weapon: What has brought about this sudden transformation? In one sense, the magic wand has been none other than the price weapon. Midway through 1981, the Government raised the price of crude oil sharply, to bring it closer in line with ruling world levels. And both before and





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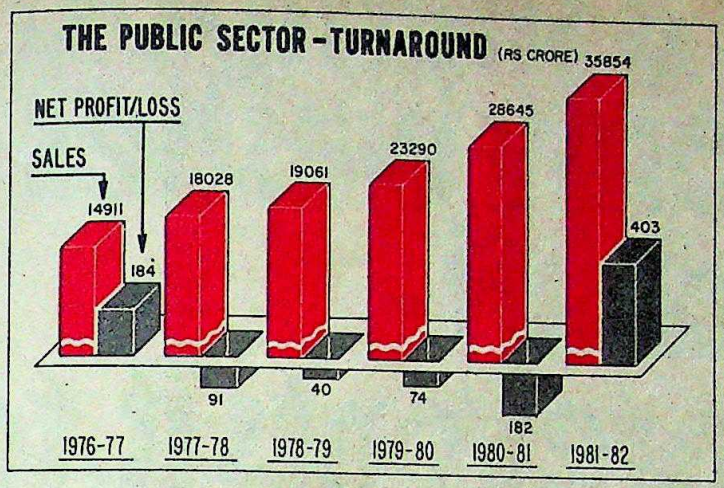

hat drastic step, prices ised for coal, steel and a of other goods. The beneficiaries, quite ily, have been the two ers of petroleum crude, and Natural Gas Com- (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd.). Between them, they in a pre-tax profit of no Rs 836 crore—over 70 of the total profits of Rs crore earned by 99 of the panies. The remaining ics suffered losses, g Rs 770 crore, but it tely becomes obvious bout profits from oil the ector as a whole would have stayed the red.

n the other hand, however, at the nd of the scale 14 perennially sick counted for over 70 per cent of the sses: the Fertiliser Corporation of FCI) alone lost Rs 125 crore, the al Textile Corporation (NTC)—an a company for sick private sector ills taken over by the Government— 160 crore, and the Delhi Transport rtion an estimated Rs 48 crore.

rues P.K. Basu, director-general of eau of Public Enterprises (BPE): "If e going to leave the oil ers out of the account- u must also leave out heavy loss makers. In ase, you once again have it for the combined s of the remaining 153 nes." Basu further ses that the profits by price increases should act from the production ade by a large number panies; an effort reflect- the figures of physical Oil production itself d sharply by 7 million

K. Kapur, chairman of HAL, stresses a ange behind the production per- e: "We have got away from the era s not being fulfilled, and entered a where targets are not only being met ceeded." S. Samarapungavan, n of SAIL, points to another basic "One major development was that been able to break somewhat the shortages in crucial inputs. Power mproved, so the coal companies were mine more coal; and since we got of both coal and power, our pro- also picked up. So on the one hand rnal constraints were removed, the other we minimised our own internal problems."

Quick Feedback: Basu of the BPE, meanwhile, mentions the back-up support that has helped achieve the results: "We have set up an early warning system for timely feedback on both the physical and financial performance. Earlier, it used to take 18 months to get a picture of the financial performance, and there was no way in which you could take corrective action in time. Now we get the full picture in a couple of weeks." The BPE has also launched a major training and executive development drive, while other bodies like the Public Enterprises Selection Board have addressed themselves to basic problems like finding men to head public sector units: a simple but neglected task that at one stage led to dozens of companies being headless.

Samarapungavan of SAIL and Puri of BHEL: managing a turnaround

K.L. Puri, chairman of BHEL, underlines another qualitative change: "We used to get a lot of complaints about quality and delayed deliveries. But we have now become customer-oriented. Our after-sales service has improved, we sit down and talk to our customers about their problems. And we have closely monitored the full range of production activities."

For all the effort that has gone into the improved performance of the public sector as a whole, some of the gains have been fortuitous: oil production showed a sharp pick-up partly because the Assam oil blockade in the previous year had reduced output; fertiliser picked up because the previous year's extreme scarcity of both power and feedstock had made it a disastrous year for the industry; and many of the Bangalore-based units have shown impressive increases because a two-and-a-half-month strike in the closing months of 1980–81 depressed that year's performance, and the subsequent year has naturally benefited in comparison. But none of these are sufficient explanations for the degree of improvement that has been registered. Basu points out that post-strike productivity in all the Bangalore units has been higher than the pre-strike levels.

Accumulated Debts: Meanwhile, a series of problems remain, many of them the result of years of indifferent performance. No fewer than 30 public sector units have been recording losses for 10 years in a row, and as many as 33 have now accumulated losses that more than wipe out their entire share capital base. Bharat Coking Coal's losses till two years ago totalled Rs 246 crore, against a paid-up capital of Rs 150 crore; HEC's losses amounted to Rs 204 crore, against a capital base of only Rs 162 crore; and in a number of other units, the interest charges on loans to tide over the loss-making periods have now reached such proportions that despite operating profits being recorded in a given year, the heavy interest charges on accumulated debt shift the balance into the red.

Many units continue to turn in abysmally low levels of capacity utilisation: 42 out of 150 had less than 50 per cent of their capacity used, says Parliament's Committee on Public Undertakings. And some units quite simply have no hope of turning the corner: Commerce Minister Shivraj Patil admitted in Parliament last fortnight that the NTC was saddled with some mills that should have been closed down, but were being kept going only in order to protect jobs.

For all that, the message of the 1981–82 figures is clear: the public sector has begun its long haul uphill, registering higher production and earning significant profits on the heavy investment made over the years.

—T.N. NINAN with RAJ CHENGAPPA in Bangalore

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easing Comes To Stay

HE AGE of sophisticated financing echniques has finally arrived. Having tried a range of increasingly slick hions in the past few years, India's nancial and credit institutions seem to step into yet another new quipment leasing.

ficial pronouncements made it clear onth that the Industrial Credit and vest Corporation of India (ICICI) was g plans for a major entry into the d the mammoth Industrial Develop- nk of India (IDBI) was probably not ead. At least five medium-scale financial companies already run ing equipment leasing operations, st month it was apparent that the es were only just opening.

easing is big business re, and at Rs 45,000 n 1979 accounted for 8 t of total investment eveloped world alone. as finally jumped onto wagon.

celerating Pace: At end, ICICI will hold an inary general meeting easing activities to its charter in the articles. he year is out it hopes h the diversified lending n which is expected to for Rs 5 crore in its first grow to at least Rs 25 1986. While the IDBI's e still in a nebulous erested parties are not cided. The Madras- undaram Finance is itself to launch a tripartite leasing which will be jointly promoted by , the State Bank of India (SBI) and ington-based World Bank affiliate, ational Finance Corporation (IFC). with an initial investment of Rs 1.5 e joint venture, India Equipment imited projects loan-lease arrange- up to Rs 36 crore once it starts t full steam.

five existing companies meanwhile eady clinched lease deals for more 15 crore around the nation. "We ssed the Rs 6 crore mark in our eration," said D. Ahuja, managing of the three-year-old Twentieth easing which went public early this nd for the next three years at least to grow at about 60 to 70 per cent . The market is growing rapidly, and it is big enough to accommodate any number of competitors."

Features: In essence, leasing is a financing arrangement under which a lending company, rather than finance the purchase of industrial equipment, buys the machine itself and then gives it on a long-term lease to the borrower. The owner of the asset remains the leasing company, while its user pays a flat monthly rental for its use. As in a hire-purchase agreement the monthly rentals eventually cover the machine's cost; but unlike in a hire-purchase plan, a leased machine does not automatically pass to the user once the instalments are paid.

The economics of leasing are pegged largely on taxation planning and corporate cash flows. In effect, the lease deal is an arrangement which passes on the benefits of depreciation and write-off of machinery to the financier while allowing the user to charge his entire capital cost on the equipment as a tax-deductible rental. The lessor's ownership is nominal, since once the equipment cost is paid for, the lease rent is reduced to a token Re 1 per year to maintain the 'paper ownership'. Since final profitability for the leasing company is determined by the amount of depreciation benefit it can claim against gross profits, this guise of ownership is essential.

Benefits: Leasing offers other distinct benefits to the borrower. The first is that leased finance generally covers at least 90 per cent of the equipment cost and often 100 per cent, unlike term loans in which the borrower is expected to put up a margin—an attractive proposition for fast-growing companies which need every bit of their working capital to sustain production and growth. Another attraction is that, unlike top-heavy term loans in which payments during the first few years can be much longer than at the tail-end, a lessee pays equal instalments throughout the lease period.

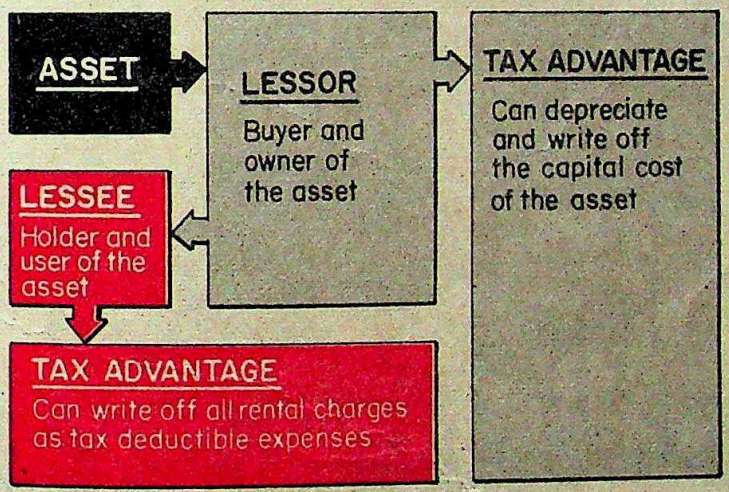
Says Suresh Nadkarni, the pudgy young managing director of ICICI: "In a lease deal the instalments can be tailor-made for a particular company: if they have seasonal sales, the instalments can be heavier in those seasons, and if the industry's cash flow is better in certain years, the instalments can be planned with that consideration." More importantly, the fast-growing company can, by paying off machinery rentals in a short period, accelerate the write-off of its machinery cost rather than do it over a long period with the statutory depreciation rates.

Prospects: Although leasing in India remains a largely unregulated business because of its novelty, according to indications last month a number of changes were on the anvil. The Government was reportedly planning a series of liberalisations for companies engaged in the activity. Following a pattern established under the Hire-Purchase Act, one change was likely to be an enhanced borrowing capacity for leasing firms. Rather than the standard conservative debt-to-equity ratio, expectations were that the Government would allow certain leasing companies to raise public deposits worth 10 times their net worth. Other plans for the burgeoning lending instrument included clearance for leasing companies to finance imported machinery, and eventually a separate legislation to regulate the business.

Despite the upsurge in interest in leasing, however, at least one murky area remains. A major disadvantage for the lessee at present is that he loses the benefits of an investment allowance normally granted on the purchase of all new machinery, since the asset is in fact bought by the finance company. But the growth of leasing in the country remains unhampered by this problem. Cashing in on an industrial environment which has grown suddenly hungry for modernization and expansion, the leasing companies are booming: from its first year of operation, in fact, Twentieth Century has declared steadily growing dividends. With the queue of new aspirants to the field growing daily longer, it was clear last fortnight that leasing in India had come to stay.

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

THE MECHANICS OF LEASING



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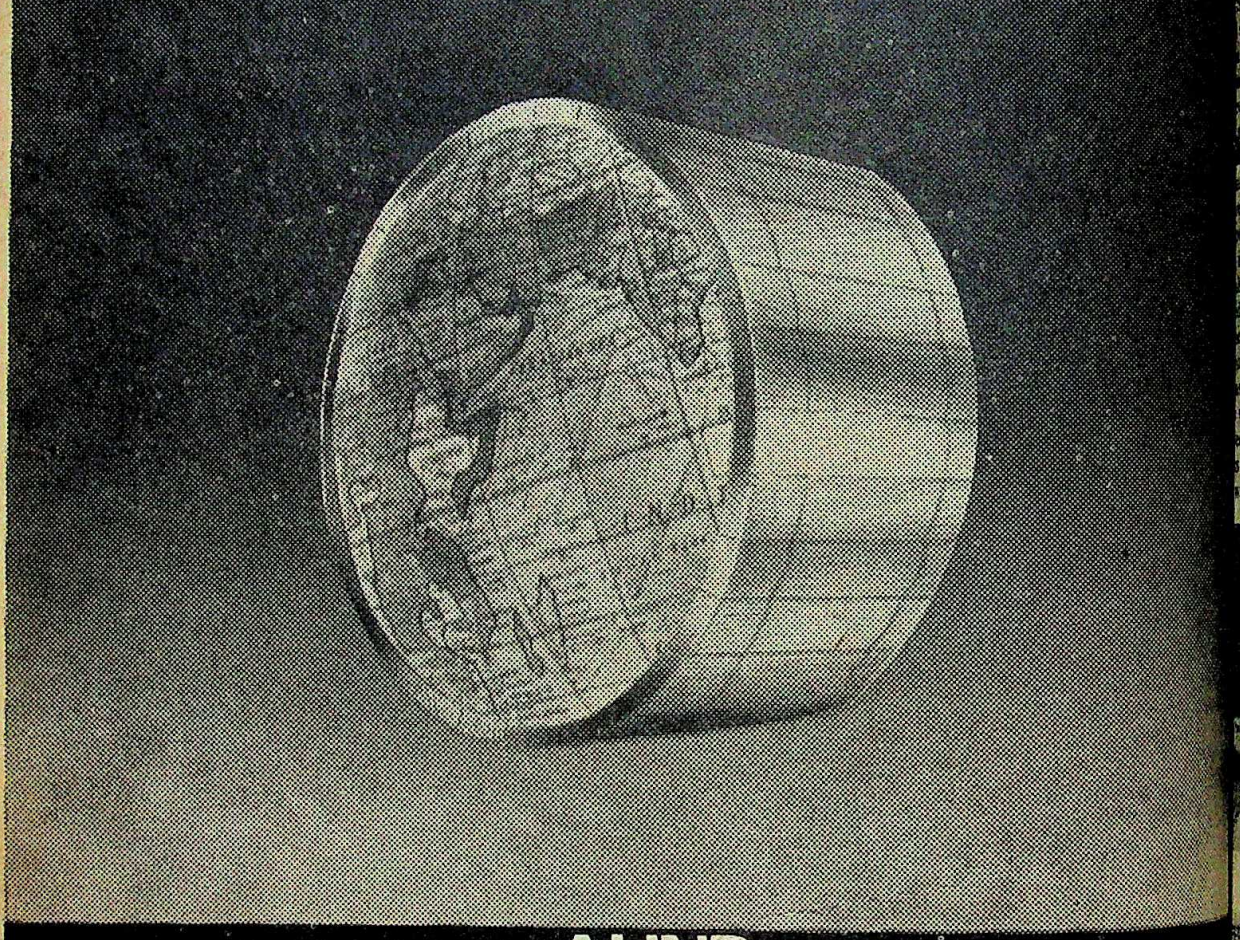

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Whether it is airlifting consignments by chartered flights to Zambia, to meet a critical delivery schedule, or involving a local company in a Rs. 500 lakh Sri Lanka order for conductors and steel wires, or delivering Rs. 53 lakhs worth of conductors to Nepal in just 30 days, ALIND has proved its worth, dexterity and expertise!

ALIND, a leading name in power movement in India. With the accent on quality in products and services like superb wire making machinery, material handling equipment, high voltage switchgear, stamping relays, foundry products, conductors and cables.

A major foreign exchange earner with a great reputation the world over for dependability. Today poised to meet the changing demands of tomorrow, in power movement and power control.

ALIND

THE ALUMINIUM INDUSTRIES LTD.

Regd. Office: Kundara, Kerala

Corporate Office: Trivandrum 695 010 Phone: 67653,67

Marketing Division: 'Rosy Tower' 7, Nungambakkam High Road, Madras 60

Phone: 811974/811975/811978

Gram: ALINDSALES Telex: 041-285

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ENGAL

ueezing The Future

s probably the most crushing finan-
eeze any state has known. Forced
combination of circumstances to cut
government spending by an unpre-
d 40 per cent, West Bengal now faces
edium-term future: no new bridges
will be built for the rest of the
year; schools and colleges will have
their plans for extending buildings;
gh the health department has been
self hoarse for funds to expand
all of which are incredibly over-
there is just no money.

situation is grim enough for the
Government to even start think-
cting for sacrifices from the state's
workers. "We are trying to get the
unions not to press for any rise in
allowance that may be announced,
ait till later when we can pay with

Basu: keeping cool

ive effect," said ministerial sources
ed to remain unnamed.

straints: The screws have been tig-
by the Centre; but then it probably
choice. Over the past year, the state
ent's overdraft with the Reserve
unted steadily, eventually reaching
Rs 400 crore and forcing the Centre
turn off the tap and to ask for a
t of the money owed.

little money in the coffers, the
nual plan has been slashed from the
crore demanded initially to Rs 490
wer even than last year's initial
of Rs 638 crore. Even this lower
uld have been impossible without a
Centre offering special aid of Rs
And for all that, the state will now
country's lowest per capita Plan

though this situation were not se-
ough, a severe drought has placed
ands on the state's resources. The
ait for relief, but there is little grain being made available by the Centre for the National Rural Employment Programme, which is critically important in a drought situation for putting money and food into people's hands.

Crisis Situation: Forced into a corner, Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, who also holds the finance portfolio, imposed a 40 per cent cut last month on all government expenditure. But with welfare schemes such as the unemployment allowance, widows' allowance and old age pension for farmers remaining unaffected—and with salaries and wages accounting for a large chunk of non-plan spending—there was little doubt last fortnight that the axe would fall essentially on maintenance work and on new investment for development. Said economist Bhabatosh Dutta: "There will be practically no new investment in the public sector. This will have a serious and immediate effect on employment and incomes, and the cumulative effect of continued cuts will be disastrous."

Contributing to the gloom will be a continuing power shortage. In its official pronouncements, the state Government has said that the investment in power will not be reduced. Last fortnight, however, there was speculation already that there would be a 10 per cent cut in the power plan outlay of Rs 161 crore. Nothing, it seems, can be spared.

State Government spokesmen see a crisis situation lasting beyond this year. "No matter what adjustments are made, West Bengal will continue to be deeply in the red for the next couple of years at least," said Satyabrata Sen, vice-president of the State Planning Board and the Marxists' principal think-tank on fiscal and planning matters.

Criticism: Sen thinks the problems stem from the Left Front Government's social welfare schemes for the unemployed, widows and the aged. The Centre has frowned on these,considering them to be doles which are unproductive and which the state cannot afford to hand out; and critics have alleged that much of the money has gone to party faithfuls rather than to the targeted groups.

Others have alleged that the state Government, convinced that it would not be allowed to last out its five-year term, had from 1980 followed a scorched-earth financial policy, spending freely and covering up the gaping fiscal holes by starting a noisy debate on Centre-state financial relations. Much of the money, it is further alleged, has been used to boost the CPI-M's rural base.

Counter Arguments: But Sen thinks differently and insists that the various pension schemes will not be given up, no matter how serious the squeeze. "We will not be discharging our social responsibilities fully if we do not undertake these schemes. With the present financial constraints, running these schemes will be difficult; but there is just no way in which we can leave these midstream," he said.

There are still quite a few in the state Government who view the current squeeze as a result of an "economic war" on the state by the Centre—and the shortage of grain for the employment programme was seen as being aimed at the CPI-M's mass rural base. However, Jyoti Basu's attitude after meeting the prime minister last month was hardly one of defiance. He at least seemed to realise that his Government would have been in an infinitely worse situation if it were not for the Centre's helping hand.

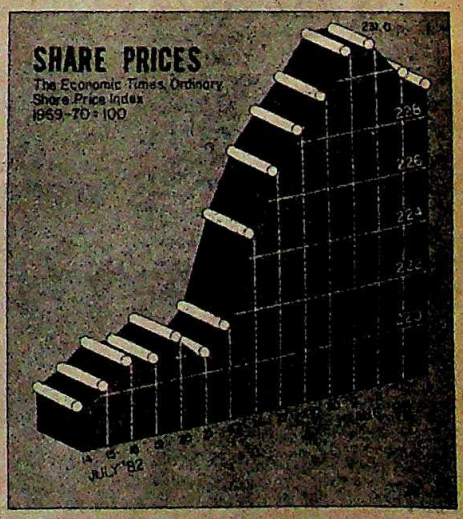
—T.N. NINAN with SUMANTA SEN

THE MARKETS

Fresh Measures

THE GOVERNMENT seems to be having second thoughts on its economic policy, and high time too. According to reports, Pranab Mukherjee will soon announce a package of fresh measures to bolster the economy and he has also said that a selective review of the liberalised import policy is under way. The market has reacted positively to these news items and most of the scrips are on their way up. Of the 70-odd scrips quoted in INDIA TODAY only a few like Tata Steel, Century Spinning and Calico could not apparently hold their own. The rest have shown great improvement and even Ashok Leyland, Mahindra & Mahindra and Telco, who were caught in the credit squeeze, seem to be out of trouble.

The prime minister's US visit has certainly helped matters. The World Bank is



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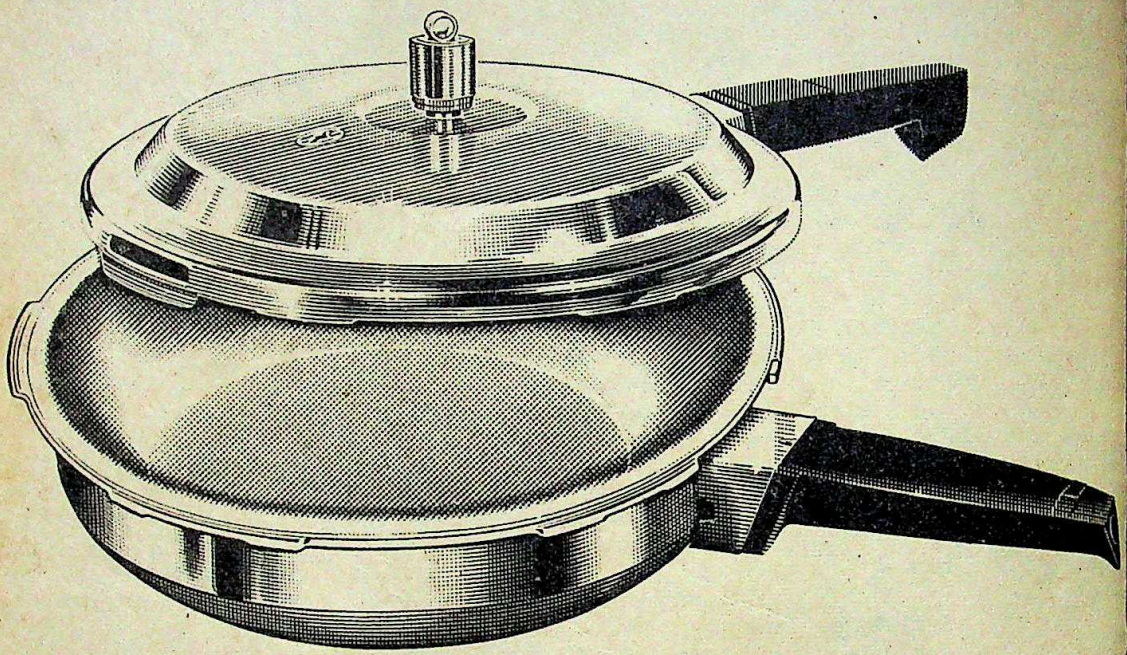
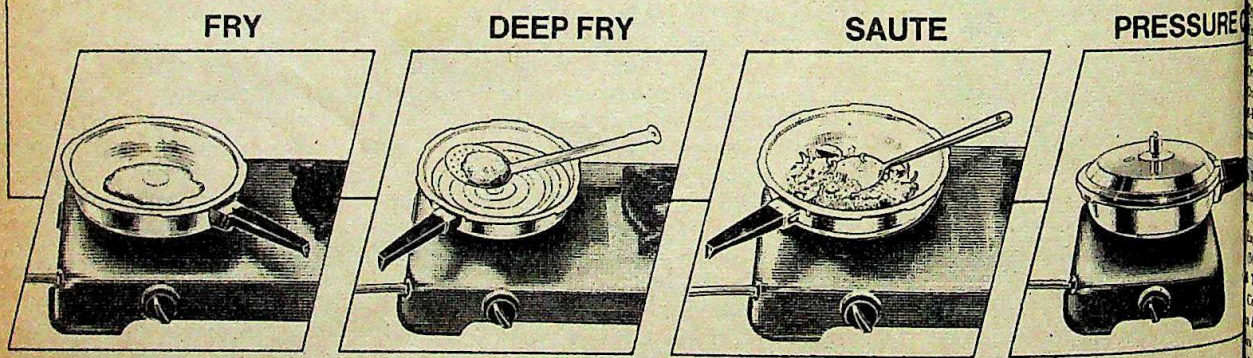
It's so versatile you'll wonder how you ever cooked without

The Prestige Pressure Pa





You can fry and deep fry in it. Season. Saute. Simmer in it. Then cover and cook. Quick. The Prestige Pressure Pan. So versatile. So convenient and handy. It just had to be designed! To help you make all those exciting recipes your family clamours for . . . . . in a matter of minutes.

Uncovered it's a heavy gauge frying pan that fries onions, vegetables, masalas, meat, chicken with the merest whisper of oil.

Cover it with the Prestige lid and it cooks your dish in a jiffy. Chicken bhurta? Twenty minutes. Mutton dopiaza? Twenty five minutes. Dum aloo? Even less. Saves your time for better things. Makes your fuel last longer.

Now you can stop frying in one pan, simmering in a sauce pan and finally cooking it all in a pressure cooker. The Prestige Pressure Pan offers you one vessel convenience with a many-vessel versatility.

The Pressure Pan comes from Prestige. The people who gave India its first, most widely used pressure cooker and developed the unique gasket release system to make pressure cooking absolutely safe.

The Prestige Pressure Pan. It will be the most used vessel in your kitchen.

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN GET THE PRESSURE PAN FOR LESS THAN HALF ITS PRICE

If you already own a Prestige Pressure Cooker congratulate yourself!

The Prestige Pressure Pan is yours for just the price of an ordinary heavy gauge pan. Buy just the pan—your Prestige cooker lid fits exactly over it to give you the new Prestige Pressure Pan at a better than bargain price. Because at Prestige we are working to give you better value, better products for your hard earned money.

If you do not own a Prestige Pressure Cooker yet...

This is the chance to get yo a real package deal. We no two marvellous kitchen aid safest pressure cooker in i with its unique gasket releas and the exciting pressure pa for little over the price of one. One lid fits both and you save over Rs. 150/-

Prestige PRESSURE PAN

A

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ACTIVE STOCKS

	High 1982	Low	Close 3.8.82	Change on Fortnight
	59.00	32.00	37.50	0.50
	377.00	212.50	336.00	69.00
Cement	1,650.00	1,230.00	1,275.00	nil
	49.60	36.00	43.10	4.10
	467.00	352.00	397.00	23.00
Dyes	42.00	26.50	36.00	4.00
Coats	34.75	26.80	34.75	3.70
	68.00	53.00	68.00	5.50
	80.00	62.00	68.00	3.50
Dyeing	18.69	15.50	15.81	0.31
Paints	25.70	20.20	25.60	2.30
Bond	18.60	14 30	14.80	0.50
Electric	346.00	217.50	218.50	(8.00)
Mills	220.00	177.50	200.00	5.00
	1,020.00	720.00	720.00	(80.00)
Spinning	25.00	18.10	19.70	nil
& Fibres	46.00	41.50	45.60	2.60
Tata	168.00	80.00	85.00	2.00
Dyes	16.20	11.65	13.30	1.55
Tea Mills	44.50	31.31	35.37	2.81
India	21.80	18.30	21.80	0.55
Tata Hotels	20.00	16.50	20.00	1.00	
	41.00	26.00	35.00	5.00
	49.87	34.25	39.25	(0.50)
Industries	47.00	35.75	47.00	3.50
Volta	48.75	38.00	42.25	(0.25)
Electric	30.15	25.40	30.15	2.45
Williams	37.20	30.00	30.30	nil
Fertilisers	506.00	368.00	420.00	10.00
Aluminium	49.20	30.00	31.70	1.10
Lever	56.00	48.00	53.00	4.50
Motors	32.14	21 82	27.02	1.08
Dyes	28.00	23.00	24.00	0.50
Aluminium	23.60	17.00	18.25	0.65
Tata	20	18.90	20.90	0.15
Tyresoff	247.50	172.50	210.00	10.00
Explosives	26.00	20.25	21.40	0.90
Nobel	107.00	50.00	57.00	2.00
Organic	35.00	26.00	28.50	nil
Organ	35.90	26.20	31.65	2.55
Steel	162.00	125.00	158.00	12.00
Sugar	45.00	29.00	30.00	1.00
	31.65	21.00	31.50	1.50
Tea	36.00	28.75	30.50	1.00
Fabrics	73.20	55.60	60.00	1.40
	54.00	45.10	54.70	4.10
Engineering	150.00	110.00	123.00	13.00
(Madras)	35.75	20.00	27.25	1.00
& Timbers	86.00	45.50	53.50	6.00
Cases	17.25	14.50	17.25	2.25
& Mahindra	61.00	38.00	45.50	2.50
Iron	17.50	11.00	14.70	3.20
	36.50	22.50	25.75	0.25
Organic	29.00	16.50	24.50	4.50
	210.00	168.00	178.00	5.00
Paper	63.00	33.50	39.25	1.75
Chemicals	48.50	34.50	39.50	0.25
Iron	30.30	26.60	26.60	(2.10)
Steam	97.00	58.75	72.00	9.00
	407.00	303.00	355.00	36.00
	29.75	21.00	28.12	1.62
	58.25	33.00	38.00	5.00
Textiles	177.00	118.00	153.00	13.00
	29.80	27.30	29.80	0.70
Tubes	66.00	34.00	38.00	1.00
	47.62	41.37	47.62	0.93
& Larsen	16.60	12.60	14.00	1.00
Cements	31.50	19.00	23.50	2.00
Bank	59.00	45.50	53.50	4.50
	429.00	310.00	321.00	(18.00)
	737.00	367.00	408.00	11.00
Textile	70.75	35.75	41.50	0.75
Iron Black	28.10	23.90	25.75	0.50
	33.50	24.10	26.25	0.50
	291.00	228.00	252.00	14.50
	26.50	19.10	21.90	2.40

now said to be more favourably disposed towards India and may raise its assistance to this country. The US Government, which has not taken kindly to our IMF loan, is also apparently having second thoughts on the matter and is likely to extend full support to India when the final instalment becomes due. These are hopeful portents which have helped improve what is known as the market sentiment.

Optimism: But what has really bucked up the market is the fact that commodity prices are looking up again, despite, or according to some analysts, because of the credit squeeze. Prices have improved across the board—some like metals, by 6 to 7 per cent in less than four weeks. Even the sugar price index is up, despite a record crop. Only industrial fibres—mainly cotton—are down, possibly due to the long-drawn textile mills strike in Bombay which has entered its seventh month. Credit squeeze and inflation do not go together—or do they? Whatever the reason, the stock markets have certainly greeted the first signs of inflation and the bulls are back in their element.

Most company reports are also bullish on future prospects and quite a few have come forward with substantial expansion plans. Modis are forming a company with Xerox for the local manufacture as well as export of copying machines. ITC is investing in a tobacco company in Nepal. Indian Oxygen is setting up a Rs 4-crore project for making a manganese-based compound used in dry battery cells. Asian Paints which has come out with a public issue is setting up a plant to make synthetic rubber lattices. Further up in the north, Ranbaxy, the only major pharmaceutical company outside the western region, is setting up a new plant in Madhya Pradesh and is diversifying into cosmetics in a big way. Hindustan Lever is expanding its Kandla unit and setting up a new plant in Kashmir.

Constraints: There are also several minus points. The chemical industry is not doing too well, as also most aluminium companies. Man-made fibres are generally in low gear and unlikely to pick up unless there is a major reversal of import policy. There are reports of droughts from several states, though cash crops are expected to do well.

By and large, however, the stock markets are on to a good thing, with several new public issues vying for attention with bond issues. It is said that the bond issues have not been too successful, but this is not really true. Most issues have done well, particularly convertible debentures, wherever shares are quoted at a premium exceeding 150 per cent. This is a good rough indicator to go by when subscribing to debentures. Shares with less than 100 per cent premium are not really worth the trouble.

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit & Currency	TT Selling Rates(Rs)	TT Buying Rates(Rs)
Australia	1 As $	9.5619	9.4653
Austria	100 As Sch	55.6495	55.0770
Bahrain	1 Dinar	25.4473	25.2621
Bangladesh	100 Taka	43.5765	43.2593
Canada	1 Can $	7.7541	7.6750
Egypt	1 Egp £	11.5349	11.4511
France	1 Fr Frc	1.4006	1.3851
Hong Kong	1 HK $	1.5991	1.5824
Indonesia	100 Rupiah	1.4516	1.4403
Iran	100 Rial	11.4557	11.3723
Italy	100 Lt Lira	0.6993	0.6926
Japan	100 Jap Yen	3.7252	3.6867
Kenya	1 K Shilling	0.8763	0.8700
Kuwait	1 Dinar	33.2462	33.0043
Malaysia	1 ML $	4.0924	4.0507
Mauritius	1 Rupee	0.8740	0.8677
Nepal	1 Rupee	0.7247	0.7194
Netherlands	D Glds	3.5283	3.4921
Pakistan	1 Rupee	0.7941	0.7383
Singapore	1 Sing $	4.4927	4.4428
Spain	100 Sp Pt	8.6131	8.5326
Sri Lanka	1 Rupee	0.4611	4.5232
Sweden	1 Sw Kr	1.5671	1.5500
Switzerland	1 Sw Frc	4.6261	4.5740
Tanzania	1 T Sh	1.0151	1.0077
Thailand	100 Baht	42.0000	41.0000
UK	1 Pound	16.5947	16.4460
USA	1 US $	9.6825	9.5450
UAE	1 Dihram	2.6040	2.5850
USSR	1 Rouble	13.1368	13.0412
W. Germany	1 DM	3.8832	3.8550

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo, Ltd., New Delhi and quoted between the banks on August 7, 1982.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

PRICES	Latest	Change on month
ET Commodity Price Index		
August 3, 1982*	251.3	6.7
Cereals	241.3	9.8
Chemicals	302.2	23.8
Industrial Fibres	175.5	(4.3)
Metals	348.4	22.5
Sugar	230.5	4.7
Textile Yarns	224.6	2.5
Vegetable Oils	293.1	15.6
Gold, standard, Aug 4 (Rs per 10 gm)	1,660.00	25.00
Silver, .999 Aug 4 (Rs per kg)	2,595.00	45.00
SHARES		
ET Share Price Index		
August 3, 1982*	231.0	10.9
Cement	167.7	36.8
Chemicals	190.6	10.4
Engineering	380.9	20.7
Fertilisers	188.1	11.9
Man-made fibres	422.4	(20.6)
Paper	476.0	39.1
Rubber Goods	163.9	33.4
MONEY		**per cent**
Money Supply, July 2, 1982		1.4
Bank Deposits		2.3
Foreign Exchange Assets		1.9

* 1969–70 = 100

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GOA

Stripping The Land

A ONE-TIME 'Rome of the Orient' with its azure skies and its golden, palm fringed beaches, Goa's ecological charms are being systematically deflowered. The magnificent forest canopy which once covered half its area has, in the past 20 years, shrunk to a quarter of its original size. The constant discharge of oil from its busy shipping lanes has desecrated its virgin beaches. And with the urbanisation rate escalating rapidly from 26 per cent to 32 per cent in the last decade, the Goan houses with their ornate porticos and old-world charm are fast being replaced by concrete high-rise monsters. Said the soft-spoken Chief Secretary of Goa K.C. Johorey: "It's a serious problem and if we don't take steps to prevent it, nothing may be left."

A concerned Central Government asked the Planning Commission to set up a task force to chart out an eco-development plan for Goa in May last year. Headed by eminent scientist and former member of the Planning Commission, Dr M.S. Swaminathan, the force submitted its report recently and urged speedy action on several recommendations like conservation of ecology, habitat planning and development of tourism which deserved "urgent attention".

With a total area of 3,701 sq km, the Union Territory of Goa is hardly a thumbprint on the vast Malabar coastline. Of its population of 10.03 lakh, about 60 per cent are concentrated in the four coastal talukas of Tiswadi, Bardez, Salcete and Mormugao. In contrast, the hilly and forest talukas of Sanguem, Satari and Canacona have sustained both the lowest population density and the most merciless deforestation. Within two decades about 900 sq km of forest stands denuded and the once lush green rolling hills are now barren and rocky. An estimated 1,030 sq km have been affected by severe soil erosion and need urgent soil conservation treatment, and uncultivable wastelands have gone up from 13,228 hectares to 28,736 hectares. Said the portly Minister for Tourism Wilfred De Souza: "Goa is becoming barren. At this rate there's going to be nothing left for the tourists to see."

Heavy Mining: The main reason for this massive deforestation has been Goa's mining industry which netted Rs 176.3 crore as foreign exchange in 1980 and is the backbone of its economy. Goa accounts for 32 per cent of the country's iron ore production and 55 per cent of its exports. The other important minerals it produces are manganese ore, bauxite, industrial clay and silica sand. Beginning in the early '40s, mineral production in Goa peaked after Japan installed a sizeable sintering capacity for iron ore here. The '50s were a boom decade under the Portuguese, with people acquiring mining concessions which gave them proprietary rights over the land for an unlimited period. Currently 500 sq km of land is covered by mining concessions and 70 per cent of these encompass forests.

With mining being done by the open casting method, apart from chopping trees in the area, the indiscriminate dumping of an estimated 300 million tonnes of rejects resulting from the extraction of 200 million tonnes of ore, has been disastrous. Since the mines are in hilly areas, the debris is washed down, destroying the agricultural lands below and polluting all the rivers. In some areas, mining has reached well below the water-table and pumping of water from these mines has affected the flow of water in streams and springs. With a view to ending the devastation, the Centre has ordered the Union Territory Government to issue notices terminating the leases from 1983 onwards, and make its prior sanction for the cutting of forest produce mandatory. Warned P.P. Malhotra, conservator of forests: "If mine owners do not take necessary precautions, we may have to stop mining before long, even if it means loss of foreign exchange."

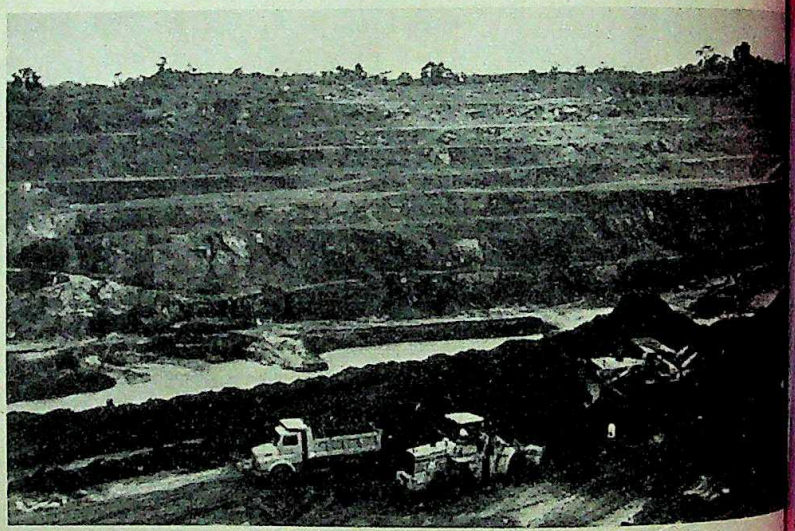
Moreover, one-third or 259 sq km of the total forest area is privately owned or comes under the system of *communidades* which were institutions recognised by the Portuguese for the welfare of village communities. Because of over exploitation, most of these have been degraded and in many instances reduced to sheet rock. [illegible] the Forest Department has had [illegible] over private forests, except to [illegible] permission to cut trees.

Official Initiative: Conscious [illegible] Goa Government is likely to [illegible] (Preservation) Bill soon, which will [illegible] tree authorities all over the state [illegible] the felling of forests. Apart from [illegible] 26 km of *communidade* land has [illegible] quired by the Forest Department [illegible] planting cashew trees on it.

Even the beaches have been [illegible] their casuarina cover by the mining [illegible] sand, and a government move to [illegible] leases was quashed in court by the [illegible] Mining has thus continued unabated [illegible] spite the task force's warning that [illegible] km of sandy beaches would be [illegible] unless the Mining Act was amended.

The cumulative effect of all these [illegible] has been to severely strain Goa's [illegible] balance. Even the normal yardsticks [illegible] progress—per capita income and [illegible] industrialisation—have not spared [illegible] nny union territory their side-effects. [illegible] enjoys a galloping rate of urbanisation [illegible] per capita income of Rs 2,675—[illegible] in the country. Industrialisation [illegible] grown apace, from a meagre 66 units [illegible] to 2,374 units today, 95 per cent of [illegible] located in coastal talukas. How [illegible] planned construction activity has [illegible] some of the best residential areas [illegible] force has observed that: "The [illegible] struction is ruining the architectural [illegible] mony and distinct character of Goan [illegible] ments." Multi-storeyed buildings [illegible] ing all over, especially near the [illegible] in an "unbecoming manner". As [illegible] angrily remarked: "Goa is fast [illegible] mini-Bombay."

—RAJ CHENGAPPA



A mine in Sanguem taluka: main threat

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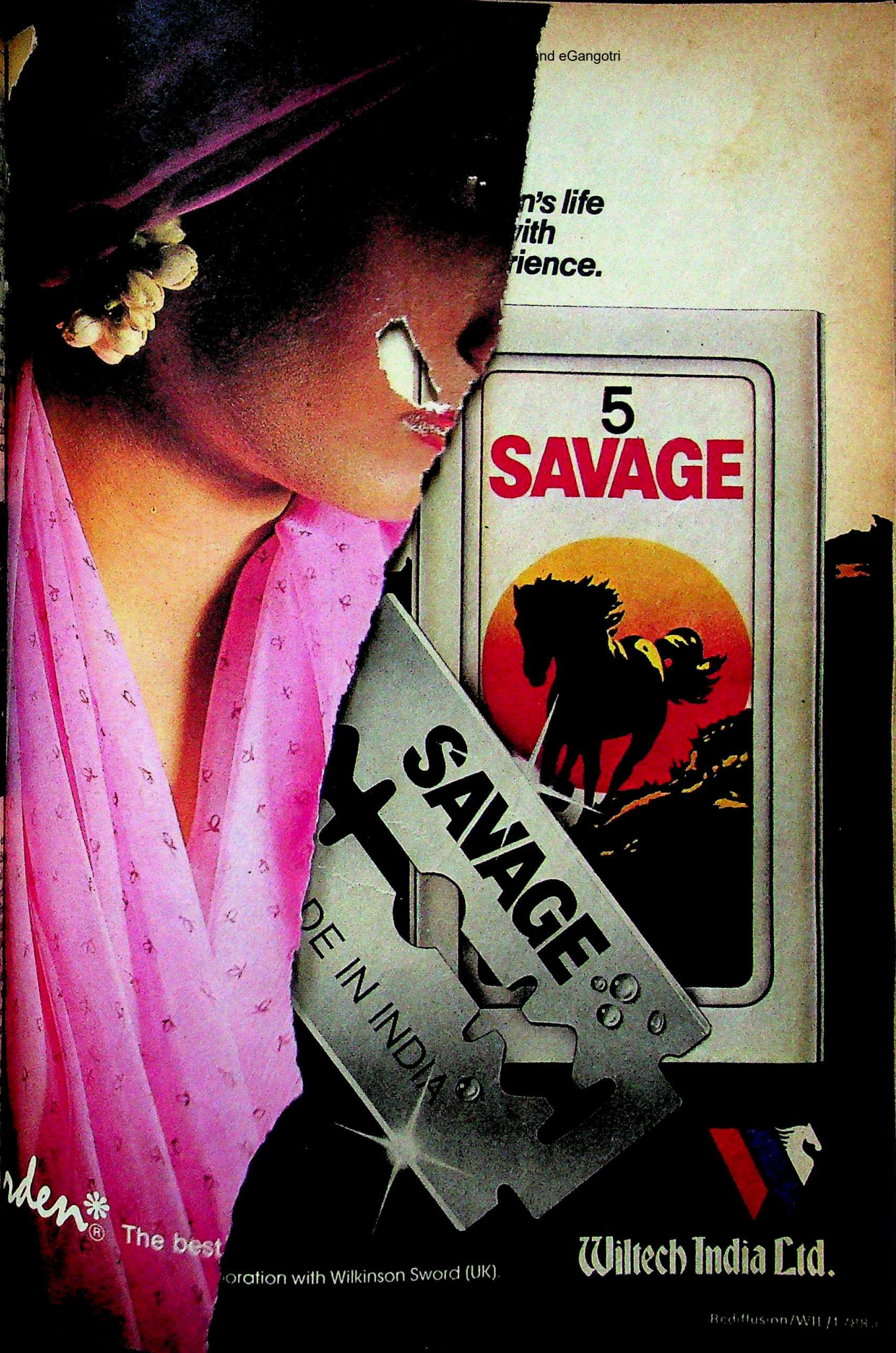

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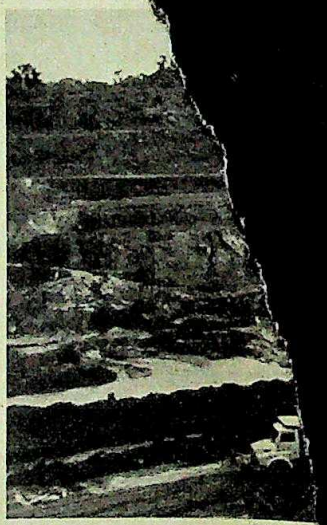
With a total area of 3,701 sq km, the Union Territory of Goa is hardly a thumbprint on the vast Malabar coastline. Of its population of 10.03 lakh, about 60 per cent are concentrated in the four coastal talukas of Tiswadi, Bardez, Salcete and Mormugao. In contrast, the hilly and forest talukas of Sanguem, Satari and Canacona have sustained both the lowest population density and the most merciless deforestation. Within two decades about 900 sq km of forest stands denuded and the once lush green rolling hills are now barren and rocky. An estimated 1,030 sq km have been affected by severe soil erosion and need urgent soil conservation treatment, and uncultivable wastelands have gone up from 13,228 hectares to 28,736 hectares. Said the portly Minister for Tourism Wilfred De Souza: "Goa is becoming barren. At this rate there's going to be nothing left for the tourists to see."

Heavy Mining: The main reason for this massive deforestation has been Goa's mining industry which netted Rs 176.3 crore as foreign exchange in 1980 and is the backbone of its economy. Goa accounts for 32 per cent of the country's iron ore production and 55 per cent of its exports. The other important minerals it produces are manganese ore, bauxite, industrial clay and silica sand. Beginning in the early '40s, mineral pro-



A min

destroying the agricultural land
polluting all the rivers. In some a
has reached well below the wate
pumping of water from these
affected the flow of water in st
springs. With a view to ending
vastation, the Centre has ordered t
Territory Government to issue n
minating the leases from 1983 onw
make its prior sanction for the
forest produce mandatory. Wa
Malhotra, conservator of forest
owners do not take necessary pr
we may have to stop mining befo
even if it means loss of foreign excha

Moreover, one-third or 259 sq k
the total forest area is privately owne
comes under the system of *communida*
which were institutions recognised by t
Portuguese for the welfare of village cor
munities. Because of over exploitation, mos
of these have been degraded and in many

ltimate shaving ex Mad

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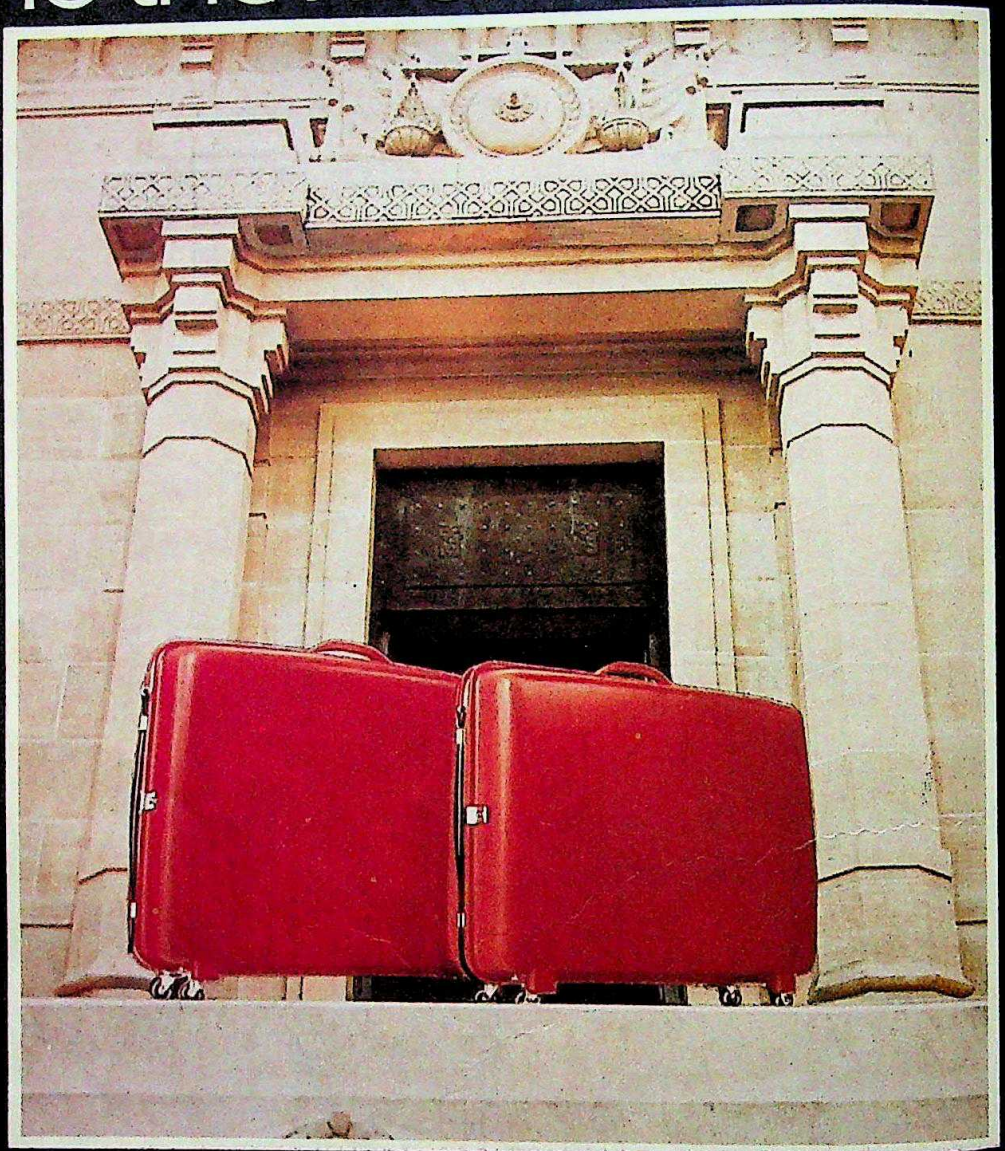

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The Travel Bug

LLOWING closely on the heels of the Gulf boom, Kerala's prospering el agencies have mushroomed so ra- ost ordinary *paan* shops are overnight nverted into posh travel agencies by portunists. A large number of travel operators have raked in millions the last few years—more than in ter trade in Kerala—by setting up catering mainly to Gulf- Keralites.

e sprouting agencies have become new phenomenon in Kerala. In the 70s, there were just four recognised encies in the state. Today the figures mingly high—there are 19 Inter- l Air Transport Association (IATA) and over 3,000 small outfits spread state. In a small village like Tirur in ram district, a large number of avel agencies run by fly-by-night rs and racketeers fix anything from g new passports to booking and ng tickets for naive clients.

acute shortage of passport books ochin passport office, the going rate sport was as high as Rs 500. The en see to it that the local MLA has igned the passport forms. These re also peddlers in no objection es (NOCs) charging labourers, g to Arab countries, an astronomi- 20,000. Said the state's Home Vayalar Ravi: "Travel agency bu- are the biggest rackets in Kerala. ab at least one fake NOC dealer a

-man Agencies: Recently, at a three- el in Trivandrum, interviews were carpenters, masons and dri- spective labour for the UAE. rview attracted hundreds of people ily coughed up Rs 20,000 for the was later found that the interview ducted by a local travel agency man, p as an Arab. M.M. Sulaiman, a bower exporter, who has made good odest beginning, now owns a posh a fleet of foreign cars and is known rector in the Gulf. When contacted refused to talk about his rags to ory. Says K.C. Jalachandran, director of Kerala Travels, the d the biggest travel agency in the cketeers have taken over the travel siness in the state. Even IATA ed travel agencies are at the mercy of gent who is a one-man travel

y village in the state has a sub- agency who put boards outside their houses claiming they run travel agencies which gets clients anything from a passport to a confirmed ticket for any Gulf-bound flight from Trivandrum. Delivered at their doorsteps, for thousands of illiterate people, it is a boon. Sub-agents are reported to collect at least Rs 200 extra per ticket from passengers bound to the Gulf. Later the agents come to the city, visit a few IATA recognised travel agencies and throw broad hints that they can get them at least 50 tickets a day provided they are given an undercutting on the fare price of each ticket. The IATA recognised travel agencies fall over each other to entice the sub-agents by adopting novel tactics to lure them.

Jalachandran: facing stiff competition

Today all IATA recognised travel agencies in Kerala not only indulge in massive undercutting but also give credit to big sub-agents. Confessed a top travel agency man: "It is highly illegal for IATA recognised travel agencies to give undercuttings, but in Kerala if we have to survive we have to listen to these sub-agents who bring heavy business from the villages." Remarked Jalachandran: "So far we have withstood the temptation for undercutting and in the process lost Gulf passengers, but we are not bothered because we have genuine European passengers who will be with us even after the Gulf boom."

A leading IATA recognised travel agency in Trivandrum with its head office in Canada is giving as high as 8 per cent discount per ticket. A spokesman of this travel agency said: "It is a free for all. Only the smartest can survive." When asked why he makes 1 per cent only he said: "It all amounts to the same. We may sell hundred tickets a day while our rivals may sell only ten but we have more volume of business." But according to industry sources the Trivandrum office of this Canadian-based travel agency is where a lot of black money operations are taking place. Asks a perplexed travel agency man: "How the hell can they survive on 1 per cent commission if they undercut all of us up to 8 per cent?"

Undercutting: Repeated efforts within the travel trade industry to set their house in order have not as yet yielded tangible results. All the IATA recognised travel agencies still recriminate with each other and continue to fight for a larger share of the Gulf cake. Said E.M. Najeeb of Air Travel Enterprises: "We, the top agents, under Travel Trade Club, held a closed door meeting and decided to stop this massive undercutting. Everybody nodded their heads, walked out and did just the opposite." Added Najeeb, a little peeved: "Kerala Travels, which claims to be above board was the first agency which grabbed two of my most trusted sub-agents after I stopped discounting."

The men who are making all the money in the trade are the sub-agents who run small agencies in villages. They not only get extra from the passengers but also get discount from IATA travel agencies. Kerala's leading sub-agent Manampoor Sukumaran, 48, is a one-man travel agency. Said he: "I am doing hundred per cent legal business. I assist illiterate passengers bound for the Gulf for a nominal charge."

Jayakumar, a top sub-agent from Attingal, a small municipality in Trivandrum district has a posh air-conditioned office and recently he converted a *paan* shop on the main road in Trivandrum into a branch office, paying a princely sum of Rs 1 lakh as deposit. Jayakumar is also an

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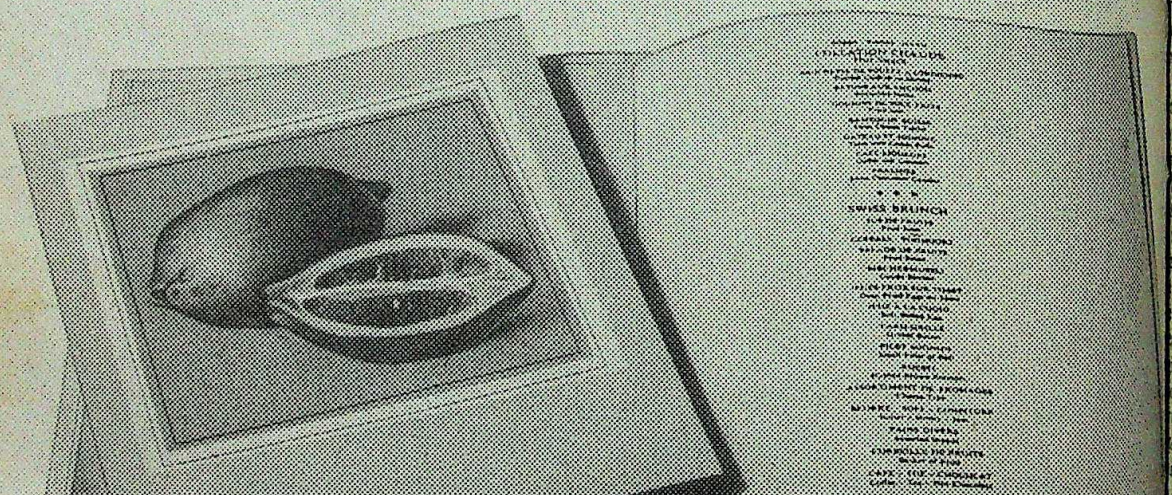

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marked Ashok Chandran, a pro-
travel sales manager: "The new
will soon take deep roots in every
Kerala. The tenders point to a
undercutting among the travel
the anomaly is that the airlines are
huge profits from its Kerala

India's vintage Boeing 707 flights to
from Trivandrum are sold out
advance. By August 15, 1982 Air-
ld replace the 707s with the Air-
bus on this route. The Gulf airlines are desperately trying to convince the Government of India that they should also be given permission to operate their Tristar flights from Trivandrum. Said Captain M.P. Cherian, sales manager of Gulf Airways in Cochin: "We are selling tickets worth Rs 40 lakh a month from Kerala which is as good as Air-India's sales in the state. In spite of all this, Air-India staff treat Gulf-bound passengers from Trivandrum as cattle."

During Mrs Indira Gandhi's recent trip to the US, four days' flights from Trivandrum were cancelled at short notices due to non-availability of aircraft. Many people from Kerala lost their jobs in the Gulf because their visas expired the next day, prior to the departure. Air-India's manager in Trivandrum T.K. Pal had no comments to make regarding Air-India's poor public relations in the state. Concluded Sukumaran: "The Gulf market from Kerala is like a fish market; it stinks."

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

INDIA

harter Starter

N A complete about-face, Air-India
has decided that it is now time to
the vast potential of the charter
et. Last fortnight it announced that
rst with, it would lease one Boeing
a private charter firm which would
e 26 flights from Munich and
to New Delhi between mid-
er and April 1983.

The decision to move into the
r business has come after years of
Captain M.S. Kohli, the deputy
ercial director of the newly
ated tourism cell sounds confident
charters will attract more tourists
the country. But doubts still persist
y quarters. Within the airline itself
a strong lobby which argues that
charters bring in larger numbers of
gers, the airline loses as the profit
per passenger is reduced
erably. This in airline jargon
ed, 'dilution of revenue'. Kohli
ers this argument saying that:
ters have always been a question
A lot of people have held different
We decided to operate charters in
mber last year and since then we
conducted various exercises to
er its viability."

t even Kohli admits that initially
me will have to face other tricky
problems. AI's base is in Bombay,
charter operators have agreed to
of Delhi. This means that it will
making a loss which could add
Rs 70 lakh on the Delhi-Bombay-
stretch for the 26 flights. The
ay this can be avoided is to get
from Indian Airlines to carry
passengers between Delhi and
y.

ritical: AI's decision has also upset
leading European tour and charter
ors who were critical of its decision
an agreement with a relatively
enced and little-known Geneva-
based tour operator Atash. Says one operator: "We have generated traffic, brought about an awareness, promoted India as a tourist destination and now the cake is being given to someone else." AI officials disagree. Says Kohli: "We asked our regional directors abroad to look for charter promoters and the response was not favourable. India does not have an image as a charter destination unlike Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Thailand. So the large operators were not interested in investing money when they were not sure of the outcome."

The airline claims that it could not have found a better team to handle its charter flights. All the main partners of Atash are old AI hands. The company is managed by Nari H. Dastur, a former managing director of AI, who resigned in 1977. Also on its staff are S.B. Boris, who worked in the company's Paris office and K.L. Lorenz, a former manager, northern Germany. Says an AI executive: "We could not have found a better team to promote India. All three involved know the market and the product."

Executives of the airline nurse big hopes for the new venture. The fares —$525 (Rs 4,725)—is lower than anything being offered at present. With one aircraft with a capacity of 160 passengers AI hopes to generate a revenue of Rs 7 crore. This includes Rs 2 crore as air fare, another Rs 1 crore from ground arrangements such as hotels and tours, and another Rs 4 crore from the money spent by the passengers. And if its schemes take off, future plans include operating direct charters from western Europe and the Gulf directly to Goa, Kovalam and Srinagar. Says Kohli: "Everything depends on how it will build up."

For all this there are still people who doubt the wisdom of AI's move. Tour operators quote the report of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) which says that: "A high proportion of the expenditure of tourists travelling on a charter airline to a developing country will be lost from the developing country's economy." But it remains to be seen first of all whether AI will be able to effectively sell India as a charter destination to the rest of the world.

—ASOKA RAINA

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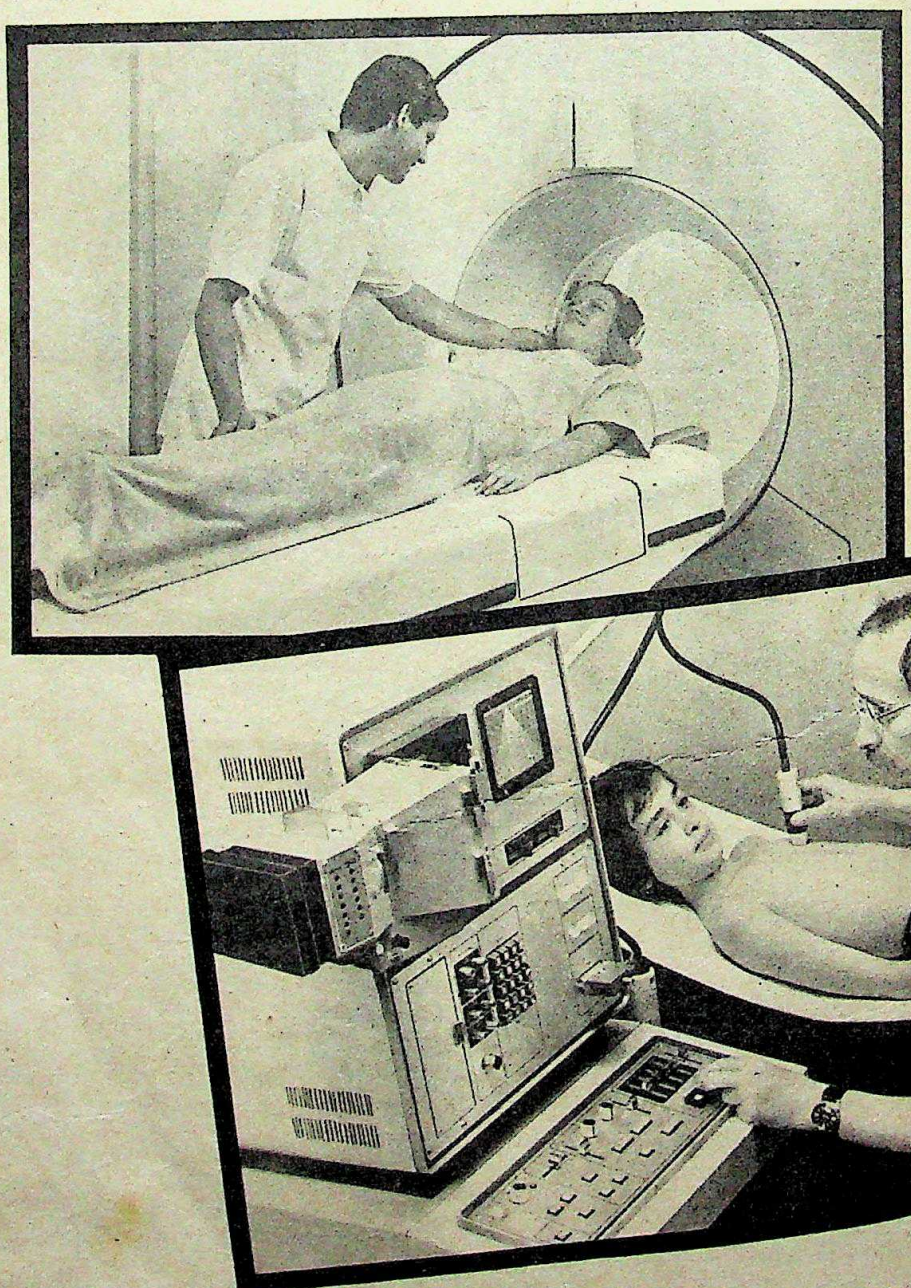

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LEPROSY

Discovery Of Hope

THE WORD itself has become synonymous with stigma—leper. During the Middle Ages in Europe leprosy was so feared that it was thought to be a punishment inflicted by the devil himself. It is, of course, nothing of the sort. Leprosy is simply a disease which attacks the nervous system—the difference is that its effects are particularly ugly. And for years now doctors have had drugs at their command to prevent the disease spreading, though there is still no way of undoing the damage caused by the disease once it sets in.

But for all this there has been a significant gap in the therapy—nobody has been able to grow the bacillus which causes the disease, in an artificial medium outside a living body. This shortcoming has hit therapy in different ways. For a start it has prevented the development of an effective synthetic vaccine that could be produced in large quantities in a controlled environment. It has also slowed down therapy as doctors are unable to run tests to determine which drugs would be most effective on different patients.

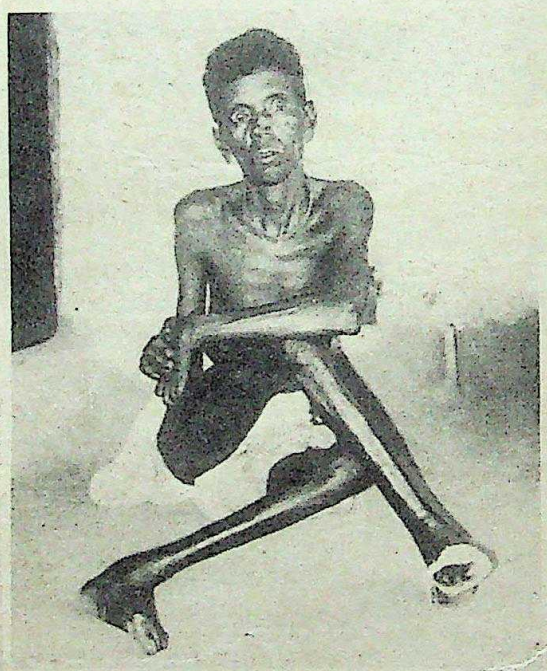
This gap has now been filled by a Madras-based researcher, Dr N. Veeraraghavan, 60, of the Research Unit on Leprosy, Voluntary Health Service. Working with the most minimal assistance—during the last two years his only helpers have been his son and a solitary laboratory assistant—Veeraraghavan has successfully grown the leprosy bacillus in an entirely synthetic medium.

Breakthrough: The success has not come easily or quickly. Veeraraghavan began his work five years ago. He brought to the field years of experience as a virologist. His first success came earlier when he discovered a culture containing human cells and serum which could play host to the elusive leprosy bacillus.

But this was only the beginning. Veeraraghavan still had to re... human cells and serum in the cu... synthetic compounds which could... duced in unlimited quantities if ... This took many years of trial a... Veeraraghavan had to work his wa... this uncharted maze experimen... more than a 100 compounds. ... time the process had finished ... obtained an entirely synthetic me... was simple to prepare and in ... human leprosy bacilli multiplied. ... however, was still far from com... attempted to improve the sensiti... medium so that the bacilli would ...

Veeraraghavan has publishe... ings in the form of a booklet, an... copies to several eminent leprologi... the world. He is now awaiting co... from his fellow-researchers in o... tries that they have been able to re... procedure. But the ... ponse has been enthu... he is confident that his ... will pass muster.

The new findin... whole host of possibi... rosy treatment has al... slow because doctors w... to find a suitable medi... the bacilli quickly. Th... to date treatment thes... prolonged one using ... drugs—Dapsone or ... cin. Dapsone is the le... of the two but a ...



A leprosy patient: an outcast from society

ORISSA

Spreading Swiftly

BELYING government spokesmen who deny the existence of a virtual epidemic, the dreaded disease of leprosy is spreading with a menacing speed in Orissa, engulfing an increasing number of tribal villages as well as coastal areas. Outdoing Maharashtra with a dubious honour, Orissa currently tops the list of leprosy-prone states with an estimated 15 lepers per 1,000 population. Official and voluntary agencies, however, put the figure at 11 to 13 per 1,000.

Startling the authorities at a news conference in Bhubaneswar recently, a Congress(I) MP from Bolangir, Nityananda Mishra, revealed that over one-fifth of the district's population was affected by leprosy. According to him villages like Singrahanga, Guri-Singhadhela and Bugaripadhi under Bolangir sub-division had 80 to 90 per cent lepers. Mishra alleged that the Government's leprosy control programme had failed and that the disease was spreading fast.

Mishra's exposé was followed by a sensational report in local Oriya dailies that out of 55,000 people in Bolangir town, over 5,500 were affected by the disease. It said that 50 per cent of the population of Puintala block were suffering from leprosy and in three villages of Tarbha block the percentage was as high as 80.

Official Censorship: Interestingly it is now a year since the Government sup... pressed the findings ... sample survey con... by a doctor of the ... and Harijan Re... cum-Training ... Bhubaneswar. The ... had found 70 per ... the tribal popula... per cent of Orissa's ... lation are tribals) ... state to be lepers ... further isolated one of the major ... for the widespread disease to ... graphite content of water from ... the sole source of drinking wat... hilly areas.

Despite all these horrifying ... the Government has continued ... tain that its anti-leprosy progra... running smoothly. Sounding sur... routine, the annual report of the ... Department proclaims that "ano... work was carried in the state as ... the control of leprosy. State gov... Central government, and ... organisations are taking keen ... control the disease". An offici...

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Veeraraghavan: dedicated worker

multiply in just a few hours. A mere scrap of leprosy-infected skin is enough to start the culture. Drug resistance and drug sensitivity can be tested within a day or two by adding the drug directly to the culture. And the bacilli can be separated from the medium, killed and used as an anti-leprosy vaccine. Thus instead of using derived bacilli, the patient's own organism can be given as vaccine. This is generally more effective.

Veeraraghavan's research has also produced several other spin-offs. While he was testing out different drugs on the vaccine, he found that anti-histamines—especially pheniramine maleate which is used in anti-allergy preparations such as Avil—inhibit the growth of leprosy bacilli. It is well known that while normal individuals react to an injection of dead leprosy bacilli, lepromatous patients fail to do so. Veeraraghavan argues that the key lies in histamines. The high level of histamines in a leprosy patient's body affect the lymphocytes which play a key role in the body's defence mechanism. This prevents the body from making an effective response when it is attacked by the bacilli. Veeraraghavan says that if the patient is given anti-histamines this process is reversed.

Clinical tests are also said to be encouraging. Dr C.S. Gangadhara Sharma, leprosy officer of the Tamil Nadu Government says that the effect of three months of anti-histamine therapy are comparable to the effects after a year of treatment with Dapsone. Veeraraghavan does not recommend vaccination for everybody. But he says that vaccination could serve to prevent relapses after therapy has been administered. He also suggests that a patient's immediate family can be vaccinated. He goes on to say that the new medium could be used to culture tubercule bacteria and other strains of mycobacteria.

More than 3.2 million Indians suffer from leprosy. Another 400 million run the risk of infection as they live in leprosy-endemic regions. The new discoveries may go a long way in removing the danger they face and by far the most fruitful steps towards banishing one of the most feared illnesses known to mankind.

—MALINI SESHADRI

Inmates at the Puri leper colony: neglected

further claimed that under the new
nt programme (point No. 14)
me Minister Indira Gandhi, the
rnment has taken special measures
ieve the goal!

According to official statistics, 43
y control units and one leprosy
project, besides a number of survey
s, rural and urban clinics and other
l units were working in the state.
er, the Government itself admitted
t of a total of 13,022,521 people
ed till 1979, 155,999 cases were
d. The official figures themselves
ed that the disease was spreading

Sad Plight: Not surprisingly, the
es of the 400-strong leper colony
Puri complained that "the Govern-
was never bothered for us". Gover-
Sahu, 60, and Arjun Nanda, 50,
ecretary of the colony told INDIA
that the Government had denied
even the old-age pension, although
them had applied for it. "We are
to go out begging," said Hara
an Khuntia, a resident. He added that: "Ten to 15 of us die every year and new lepers come in our place." "There are always 50 to 60 lepers waiting for their entry into the colony", pointed out Gangadhar Das, lamenting that no politician ever came to see their plight. "They only come during election time," was an oft-heard complaint.

Relief has come by way of voluntary organisations, especially those run by missionaries. Father William Petrie of the Bhubaneswar-based Human Life Centre (HLC) said that at least 10 private organisations were engaged on the job. However, while alluding to their efforts to coordinate with government agencies, he emphasised their inability to undertake a state-wide programme on their own initiative. With a team of dedicated workers, the HLC is managing five leprosy villages having 8,000 patients. Besides, it runs mercy kitchens at five places and has launched a number of other welfare and rehabilitation schemes with bank assistance and help from other sources.

Informed sources allege that the official penchant of increasing grants for rehabilitation works is negated by large-scale misappropriation of such funds. Recently the Government decided to launch a Rs 18 lakh rehabilitation plan for Bhubaneswar itself and many organisations sprang up to claim these funds. With greater fortunes to be had with a larger number of diseased persons, profiteering leeches continue to fatten on human blood while bland officials look on and churn out statistics.

—FARZAND AHMED in Bhubaneswar

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A living, moving, working pledge.

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Come to where the action i

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Caparisoned elephants. And the famous Kathakali and Panchavadyam performances every day of the Week. With exciting boat races at Cochin and Paipad (Near Alleppey). When the famous Malampuzha Gardens will be illuminated on all nights in the Week And the gaily lit long avenues and beautiful old buildings of the capital city will transform Trivandrum into a fairy-tale land All this culminating in a spectacular pageantry on the evening of the 4 th of September.

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29 th August to 4 th September

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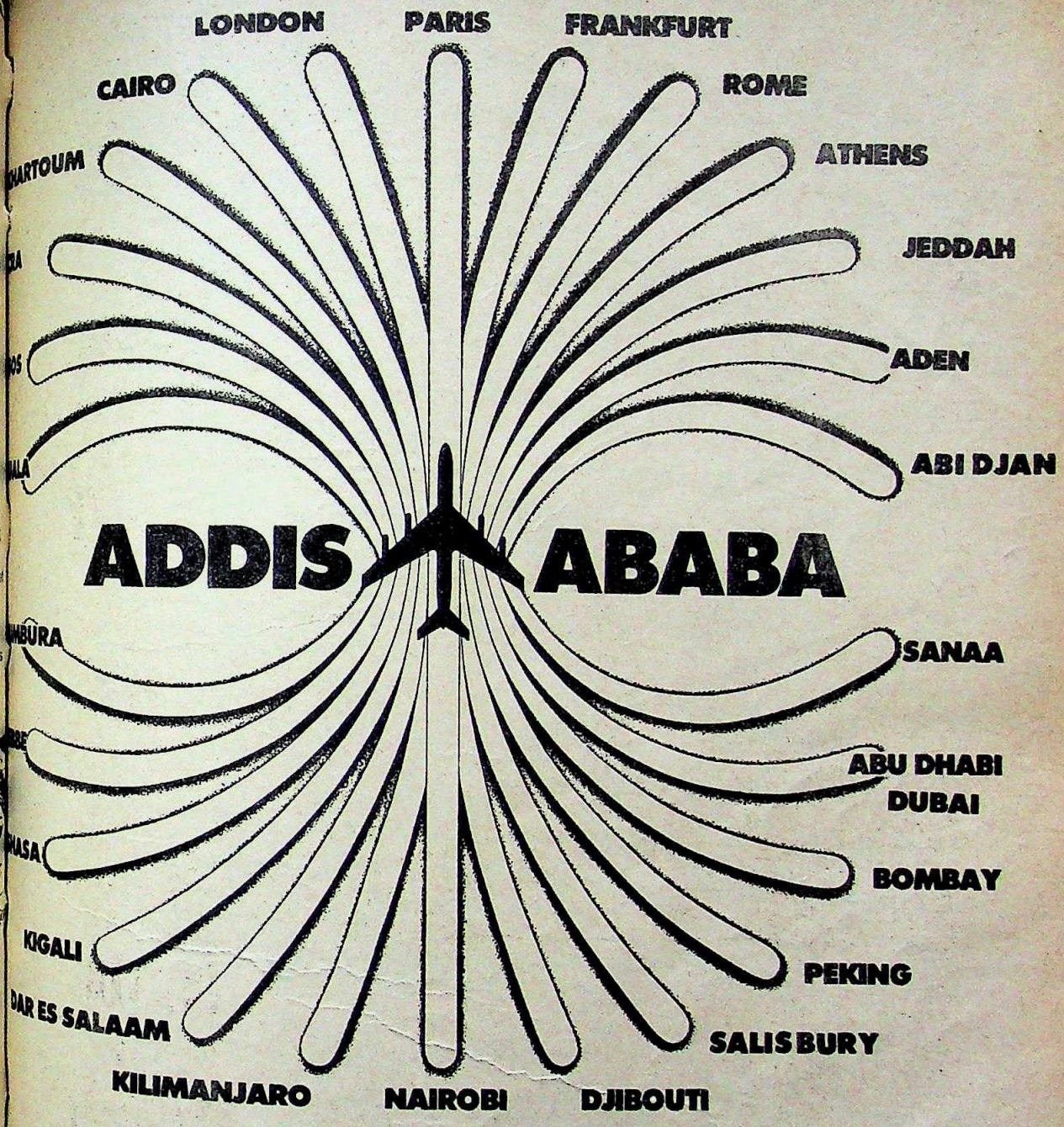

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Mishra's Fig Leaf

"I HAVE little intelligence... I am a lay man... How can I know anything about these legal matters?" —that was one of the characteristic responses, repeated again and again, of Jagannath Mishra, the Bihar chief minister, to our queries about the provisions of the Bihar Press Bill.

There were a few other responses too and I'll come to them in a moment.

Three of us—K. Narendra of the *Daily Pratap*, K.R. Malkani of *Organiser* and I—were in Patna on behalf of the Editors' Guild to ascertain facts about the bill. Mishra had returned around 11 a.m. on Sunday, August 8,from Delhi, having gone there to welcome the prime minister. "He is very busy, many appointments," the director of public relations had told us, "and he has to go on an official tour by train at 4 p.m."

So, we were particular to be punctual, entering his office at 3 p.m. sharp. Mishra's attention was immediately taken up by the file in front of him. I have always found this a very remarkable coincidence: the moment you enter a minister's office is the very moment that he finds he must dispose of a file!

In any event, Mishra, a rotund man with four huge rings on his right hand and two on his left, disposed of the file in 10 seconds or less and we were off.

Had the Government collected examples of objectionable writing in the press which had impelled it to bring forth the bill?

No, he said, the Government had no compilation to which he could refer us. It had drafted the bill purely on its "impressions."

Examples: When we pressed him to furnish us at least some examples of the kind of writing he had in mind, he furnished three. During the Biharsharif riots, he said, a news agency stringer had filed a report saying that a pond had been poisoned and 500 persons had died as a result. Second, he said, the majority of writings in the press in Bihar aimed at fomenting casteism and inflaming communal passions. Third, he said, some papers had been printing editorials that "not a single acre," had been brought under irrigation in Bihar in the last 30 years and that, "there has been no agricultural progress at all."

Now, the bill deals only with writing that is "grossly indecent", "scurrilous" in that it injures a person, or is "intended for blackmail." Therefore, presuming his account of these press reports to be correct, we asked him how the new bill would help the Government combat the sorts of dispatches he was referring to.

He said that the poisoned pond dispatch would be covered under the provisions against writing "intended for blackmail"! And that dispatches that fomented casteism and communalism would be covered by provisions against "scurrilous" writing! He did not specify what provision would deal with the third example of objectionable writing he had mentioned.

We laughed at the construction he was putting on the words and advised him to change his legal officers.

"I have little intelligence," he said each time we drew his attention to the exact words of the bill—"grossly indecent", "scurrilous," "intended for blackmail" successively—"I am a lay man... How can I know anything about these matters?"

Mishra's bill aims at intimidating and frightening the press into silence. It has nothing to do with the objectives that have been proclaimed on its behalf by the Bihar Government. The kinds of writing that Mishra and others say they want to curb are not covered by this bill at all.

This is the standard response in Bihar, I told him. We had requested an appointment with the chief secretary; he wasn't available. With the additional chief secretary, who, we were assured was the major-domo at the moment; he too was not available. With the home secretary; he said, "you better leave met out of this." On Saturday, August 7, one minister agreed to meet us. The meeting was set for 11 a.m. on Sunday. At 10.30 a.m. his personal assistant rushed over to our hotel to say that the minister would not be able to meet us as he had suddenly remembered that he had to be in Arrah that morning. At last the director of public relations had come over on behalf of the Government, files and all, after talking over the telephone to the chief minister, who was then in Delhi. But each time we asked him a specific question, his answer was the same, "I am a small fry. How can I answer that?"

Mishra isn't the kind who'll d... "a small fry"; so he was again a... to the , "I have little intelligence"... press had been fanning riots and ... casteism and communalism all t... we asked, why had the Gover... proceeded against it under the I... Code (IPC)? After all, just a few ... Sections 153A and 153B had be... cally introduced into the Pena... prevent anyone from "promot... between different groups on ... religion, race, place of birth, re... nguage, caste or community or ... ground whatsoever", and to preve... tations and assertions prejudicial ... integration". Offences such as the... made punishable with imprison... three years.

Assertions: Mishra had ass... statement he had made in the As... "*a majority of writings* in the new... those which (i) tend to promote ... hatred and enmity; and (ii) infring... decency or morality...." I asked ... ther he stood by this statement.

He was most emphatic: ye... press does nothing but this.

If the press had in fact bee... communal hatred and enmity, if ... been offending decency and mor... long and so consistently, wh... government not launched cases ... papers? Had it not been derelict ...

He said that the existing ... "*bakwas*" and it was his gover... perience that it took very long ... anyone under them. (He should ... Urban Cooperative Bank case in ... himself an accused has been ... stalled for eight years!)

How many cases had his ... filed, we asked.

Many, he said.

Had he a list?

No, he said, no such list ... compiled.

We put it to him that ... government had filed only one ... of defamation against a newspaper ... case filed on February 20, 19... *Indian Nation*. Since cognisance ... the case the magistrate has had ... the case six times, on each ... reason was that the state, ... *Nation*, failed to produce any ... sought more time.)

He said he did not know ...

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...uestions.
...d he recall any other case?
...he said, he could not.
...d said that the Press (Objection-
...ers) Act, 1951 had been found to be
...weapon" to deal with objectionable

...this government filed any cases
...act, we asked.
...several, he said.
...ut it to him that in fact his
...ent had not filed any case under it
...had come to power two years ago.
...clined ground swiftly. I'm talking of
...ence of his government in filing
...der this act, he said, he had actually
...ing of the cases that had been filed
...revious Janata governments also,
...said, that had been filed in the
...ve—and not just two—

...then informed him that
...had been talking about
...er which he had been
...several cases had been
...last two and then the
...ars had not been on the
...ck for the past 30 years!
...1951 had a term of only
...in keeping with the pre-
...ication that acts of this
...in those days given lives
...year at a time. The act
...pired. And having en-
...him, we laughed. How
...have been filed under
...ring the last 2 or 5 years
...itself had not been in
...or 30 years?!

...ng Blame: He was taken
...did not respond. But the
...'s director of public
...who was also present,
...that the chief minister
...blame. He had merely
...statement in the Assembly and
...us now what the concerned
...had written out for him.
...was the concerned department?

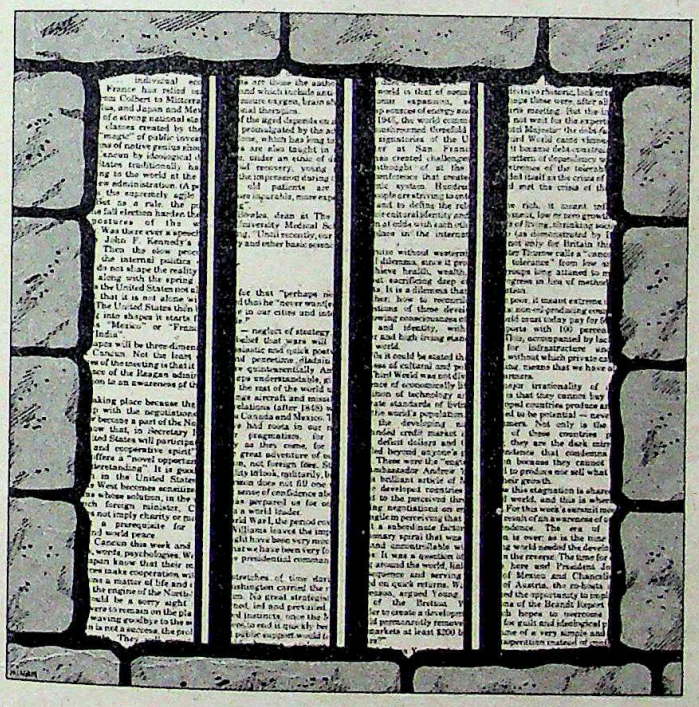
...the minister incharge of the
...?
...himself!
...e laughing again.
...was now intimidated enough to
...ng self. The opinion of the press
...he said, did not matter. "It is an
...erty."
...asked, also an interested party
...n't his opinion be ruled out of
...e same reason?
...the people have put me on this
...ained, "as long as I am here, it is
...do whatever I think is nece-

It is this smugness—which we encounter again and again these days—it is this argument—which is the final refuge of every political scoundrel in this country today—which always sends me up the wall. And it did this time too. Here are these fellows pillaging the country, destroying institutions and everything else and they insist that it is the poor people of India who have given them the right to do what they will.

We had raised our voices and the meeting would have ended but for the tact of my colleagues.

Mishra relaxed and put forth his general approach: "*hum to hamesha Indira Gandhi ke hi programme laagu karte hein*" ("I always put only Indira Gandhi's programmes into effect.").

He had slipped again. So, this bill was a



Central Government programme was it? Was it true then, as he had insinuated to his partymen in Patna, that he had obtained the Central Government's approval for the bill from Vasant Sathe, the minister for information and broadcasting in Delhi? Was it true then, as he had also told his partymen, that he had in fact obtained the clearance of Mrs Gandhi herself when he had met her on the eve of her departure for the US?

He realised the costly blunder. "No, no," he rushed in to say, "I was talking of the twenty-point programme." And that without so much as a blush.

He had recovered enough by now to put forth a new argument. The Janata Government had passed the same bill, he said, "Venkataraman has said so in Parliament. How could he say so if it weren't true?"

As others do, I said, reminding him of his own record in the Assembly in the recent past.

My colleagues laughed. At this point Malkani cajoled Mishra to share the joke.

He didn't succeed.

"I believe in serving the people", he said in conclusion, "*Bhagwan mein atoot vishwas rakh kar...*" ("with eternal faith in *Bhagwan...*").

That was too delicious. I was transcribing it in Hindi.

"No, no", he shot up, "you don't have my permission to write that."

"Your permission?", I had raised my voice, "who told you that I need your 'permission' to write? You have been spoilt by these Bihar journalists who seek your permission to write. We have not come here for chit-chat. If we had been told that we needed your 'permission' to write, we wouldn't be wasting our time. What do you want me to scratch out? Do you want me to scratch out '*Bhagwan*'?"

"*Nahin, nahin*", no, no, Mishra said, "*Bhagwan' mein mera atoot vishwas zaroor likhiye*," (do write about my eternal faith in Bhagwan).

Is that all, I asked.

"*Aur Indira Gandhi ke neitriyeta mein bhi atoot vishwas* (and also about my eternal faith in Indira Gandhi's leadership)."

We were laughing but he was keen that I take his words down verbatim.

"*Bhagwan upar aur Indira Gandhi yahaan*", he said—"God up there and Indira Gandhi here"—"It is with this faith that I serve the people."

Another Lie: There was one final lie I wanted to nail down. I'll record what he said now and you'll see the lie in a moment.

It has been alleged, I said, that you hustled this bill through. But surely that isn't true, is it? You and your government must have deliberated over it for long, isn't it, drafting and redrafting it, assessing your experience with existing laws?

Yes, he said, they had had the measure under consideration for a long time.

How many months, we asked.

Five to six months, he said.

It was a quarter to four, we reminded him about the train he had to catch and thanked him for sparing time till just 15 minutes before the scheduled departure of his train.

We got into our car and reached the airport to await our flight back to Delhi.

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And guess who should turn up at the airport, accompanied by two car loads of hangers-on?

Jagannath Mishra himself!

The cars sped up to the state plane. Four large suitcases were put into the plane. A few of his family climbed into it. And then Mishra heaved himself up the stairs, reached the door of the plane, turned about swiftly as his leader does, waved to the hangers-on, the very gesture he must have picked up in Delhi, and was off.

Where to, we inquired.

He has gone to perform *puja* at the Devgarh shrine, we were told.

So much for the official tour by train!

What is Mishra's bill? Why has he hustled it through the legislature? What should be done about it?

MISHRA's bill aims at intimidating and frightening the press into silence. It has nothing to do with the objectives that have been proclaimed on its behalf by the Bihar Government.

The kinds of writing that Mishra and others say they want to curb are not covered by this bill at all. They *are* covered by existing provisions of the IPC; like Sections 153A and 153B, which Mishra's government has never even attempted to use.

In the statement Mishra claims he made in the Bihar Assembly, he has made many factual claims: "In the very large number of newspapers we studied and the variety of topics in respect of which the study was carried out there have been many instances where a report was twisted... Yellow journalism of one type or another is increasing in this state... We have also come across news items strongly suspected to be false, if not known to be false, that have been published to increase circulation... Instances... have come to our notice when financial concerns and other institutions have been subjected to false and malicious attack... a majority of writings in the newspapers are those which (i) tend to promote communal hatred and enmity and (ii) infringe or offend decency or morality and publish scurrilous or obscene matter defaming individuals..." He made other such claims.

The Bihar Government is not able to produce any evidence worth the name to substantiate even one of these assertions. After what must have been an extensive search the representative of the Bihar Government was able to produce only two rags as evidence.

One was the January 4, 1981, issue of the eight-page weekly tabloid *Splinter* said to be published from Patna every Sunday. And the other was the July 10, 1981, issue of an even smaller six-page tabloid called *Magadh Dharti*, said to be published from Gaya.

The first carried an account of how things had deteriorated to such an extent that strip-tease dancers had been entertaining audiences at a religious fair. The second had an account of a woman who was said to have been kept by a priest and had now been abandoned by him. The first carried three single column photographs of naked strip-tease dancers which were said to have been taken at the fair. The second carried one photograph of the man holding on to the breast of the woman.

Was the Government really horrified by such photographs and write-ups, we asked.

Oh, yes.

Why then did it not prosecute the papers under the IPC?

No answer.

Indeed, one could buy pornographic books all around Patna's enormous Gandhi Maidan. Why had the Government never acted to curb this trade?

No answer.

The press that Mishra's government had successfully 'managed' has fallen out with him over the past year: the Government is thus not able to 'balance' adverse and truthful reports about corruption and maladministration.

Even more: the very issues that we had been given carried advertisements from the Government: a full page one in the six-page *Magadh Dharti* and a half page one in the eight-page *Splinter*! Why was the Government patronising such publications?

No answer.

What was the circulation of these two publications?

About one hundred each.

What, only one hundred?

Well, actually one thousand...

Such is the evidence backing the bill and such are its stated purposes.

Real Purpose: The real purpose is to frighten the press into silence. Mishra's government is today impelled to silence the press for four reasons.

First, corruption and maladministration in Bihar have reached such enormous proportions that, even though the press is not very vigilant, even though it is shy of pursuing cases involving high-ups in government, with increasing frequency while investigating other matters it stumbles upon and thus prints some material relating to corruption and inefficiency; the [illegible] not easily refutable and is thus [illegible] venience to the Government.

Second, during the last [illegible] Mishra has felt compelled to lean [illegible] more heavily on tantriks and [illegible] Correspondingly the influence of [illegible] acters in his government has be[illegible] vious. Newspapers and magazines [illegible] documenting this liaison. These [illegible] what with all the sloganeering [illegible] cialism, secularism and the scientific [illegible] have been particularly embarrassi[illegible]

Third, the large section of the [illegible] Mishra's government had succes[illegible] naged' has fallen out with him ov[illegible] year; the Government is thus [illegible] 'balance' adverse and truthful repo[illegible] its corruption and maladm[illegible] Something more has therefor[illegible] unavoidable.

Fourth, there are today four m[illegible] movements in Bihar and about [illegible] small groups of persons who are w[illegible] and among the poor in Bihar; ther[illegible] and what the Government does [illegible] them, figure in the press and give th[illegible] professions.

It is for reasons such as the[illegible] Bihar Government is today i[illegible] frighten the press into silence. The [illegible] the instrument for doing so.

Customary Lies: The bill wa[illegible] by the Bihar Government's custo[illegible] I'll recount just one example.

On February 25, 1982, *Arya*[illegible] of the two leading Hindi dailies i[illegible] with a dispatch that said that [illegible] Government had sent its officials [illegible] Nadu to study the new laws reg[illegible] press that had been passed there [illegible] patch said that this was p[illegible] Government's plan to put further [illegible] the press and it raised the questi[illegible] the Government would promulg[illegible] dinance to give effect to these p[illegible]

On March 3, Mishra addres[illegible] conference. He made three points [illegible] to the dispatch. The dispatch was [illegible] "baseless", he said. First, he said [illegible] had been sent to Tamil Nadu to [illegible] new law promulgated there. Secon[illegible] the Government had no plans to [illegible] an ordinance on the matter. Third[illegible] fact, the Government had no[illegible] before it for putting new curbs on [illegible] prevent 'objectionable' writings.

On March 6 both *Aryavart* [illegible] *Nation* printed the photocopy o[illegible] commissioner's order dated [illegible] 1982, asking designated officials [illegible] to Tamil Nadu for studying the [illegible] for formulating similar legislation [illegible] They also gave the names of [illegible] had gone to Madras in mid-F[illegible]

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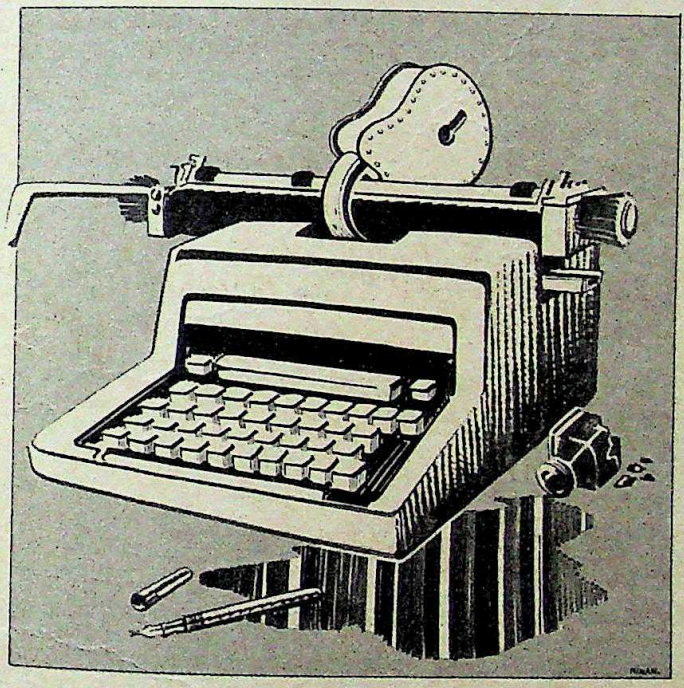
their report about the proposals.

for not having anything under on March 3, as I recorded a Jagannath Mishra himself told and his government had been the matter for five to six months! was the last day of the Bihar 's current session. Twenty-four no- been listed for sending the bill to mittees and for eliciting public ruay amendments were also listed. assembled at 9a.m. By Bihar the chaos was unprecedented: "howls", "fisticuffs", "mikes snat- papers torn to pieces", "free for all" how the papers described the deli- The House had to be adjourned five it met for the sixth tumult, chaos were the almost everyone was in the House, shouting, gesti- shoving. This continued five minutes. Suddenly announced that the bill passed and that the adjourned *sine die*!

Unseemed Speed: None notices had been dealt of the amendments had moved or put to vote. bill itself was not put to didn't get to say a yet—in keeping with else about this episode Government placed advertisements in the giving what it claimed of "The Chief Minister Mishra's statement in Vidhan Sabha on July —almost 4,000 words have taken Mishra at notes to read out to the



things don't end with the news- statements. Karpoori Thakur tells Assembly proceedings as they been circulated show that the was actually made in the House! rected the Patna High Court has take cognisance of these facts on that what the legislature does is court's business.

aspects of the bill strengthen the that the Government intends to the press by it.

Each of the key words in it has been. Indeed, in the Hindi version "asaunlous" has been transcribed i.e. "unclean" or "dirty"! And, Chief minister reported that the Government intends to put very creative and elastic construc- words and provisions of the bill. offences under the bill have been made non-bailable so that a person can be detained for several days in any event.

Third, it is not just the writing and publication of matter that the Government deems as objectionable which will henceforth be an offence; the mere "possession" of "any printed or writen document" containing such material will be an offence punishable, as other offences under the bill, with imprisonment up to 2 to 5 years. This provision will effectively frighten off news agents, retailers and hawkers and even readers from handling any publication that—ignorant or, at best, ill-informed of the law as they are bound to be—they are told the Government is liable to find objectionable.

Fourth—and this is its most sinister aspect—the bill does not come alone. A month before this bill was hustled through the Bihar Government amended the Press Accreditation Rules. Henceforth it said, a journalist would be disaccredited and a newspaper or news agency would forfeit all "facilities" if he or it "misused" the facilities or access or if it violated the Official Secrets Act or if it published reports "violative of journalistic ethics." And just three days before the bill was passed, the Government pushed through far-reaching amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code.

The vital Section 190 of the Code too was amended, so that from now on the vital powers to take cognisance of cases, to direct investigations and institute trials will vest with executive magistrates. The Press Bill specifically provides that cases under it will be triable by "any magistrate"! The two bills taken together will thus ensure that cases against the press under the Press Bill will henceforth be processed not by judicial magistrates who function under the High Court but by executive magistrates who are completely under the control and direction of Mishra's government itself.

Fear: The bill has already succeeded in making pressmen and others apprehensive in Bihar. Once it becomes an act several—in particular the isolated *mofussil* correspondents, news agents, retailers and hawkers—will be frightened into silence.

And if the design succeeds in Bihar it will surely be replicated in other states. Even without its adoption by other states, the Bihar bill when it becomes an act can be used to harass publications anywhere in India. A magazine published from, say, Bombay is sold in Bihar and its contents can therefore be held to be adversely affecting the morale of public servants in Bihar.

The bill raises several questions. If bills are to be concocted on evidence of the kind we have encountered in this case, what won't pass muster? If existing laws are not going to be used and that is to provide the rationale for more stringent laws, where will the process of endowing the state with more and more arbitrary powers end? If bills passed in the manner in which this one has been passed, are going to be law, where will parliamentary democracy end? Who is a danger to our institutions and our country—the ones who indulge in wanton misdeeds or those who report these to the public? When a system at last shuts out the truth, does it protect itself or does it preclude reform and hence ensure its eventual collapse? Will powers of this kind—howsoever far-reaching they might be—eventually save the regime? Did the Shah of Iran not have total control over the press, radio, TV? And of what avail was it in the end?

But these are familiar questions. What should be done about this particular bill?

First, arrangments should be made all over Bihar so that information about the harassment or arrest of anyone under the new law can be swiftly disseminated within and outside Bihar; and groups of lawyers should be organised in Patna, Ranchi, and as many other places as possible so that legal assistance can be provided without delay to anyone who is apprehended under the new legislation.

Boycott: Second, the press should pay the Bihar Government back in its own coin. All official functions of the kind at which

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ministers and official spokesmen. seek to project themselves should be boycotted. If handouts about ministers' speeches at such functions are distributed, only the truly newsworthy announcements in them should be reported briefly. The names of ministers should not be reported. Thus, if X, the minister for education, announces with the customary fanfare that he has decided to open 24 schools in Biharsharif, a report should merely state that "it has been announced on behalf of the Government that 24 schools will be opened in Biharsharif." Don't describe the function. Don't report the minister's name. Moreover, photographs of ministers of the Bihar Government too should not be carried by the newspapers.

Third, the press must realise that, try as it might, the Bihar Government will just not be able to sustain prosecution under this bill of any comment or exposure of the kinds that have been really upsetting Mishra and Co. Explanations one and two of the bill that exempt from the purview of "scurrilous" writing anything written in good faith about the conduct of a public servant including whatever is written about his character in as much as it affects the discharge of his public functions will defeat the design of the Mishra Government. Today he touts as his justification the fact that Tamil Nadu had enacted the law first. Tomorrow he will regret having adopted the Tamil Nadu text so faithfully.

If the design succeeds in Bihar it will surely be replicated in other states. When the bill becomes an act it will be used to harass publications anywhere in India.

Finally, the most effective remedy is to show the bill to be a toothless scarecrow by continuing to write truthfully about the true state of affairs in Bihar. As it is likely that once the bill becomes an act much of the press in Bihar will be successfully intimidated into silence, the press outside Bihar should redouble its coverage of Bihar. And as representatives of these outside publications who are stationed in Bihar will be vulnerable, these publications should make it a practice to send correspondents located in other centres into Bihar to collect material and file reports. The best way to pay Mishra back is to teach him that the bill he pushed through to shut off coverage of his deeds has in fact redoubled it.

Living well is the best revenge!

This is the text of the Magasaysay Award winner ARUN SHOURIE'S *preliminary report to the Editors Guild*

BIHAR

Gunning For The Press

IT HAS been labelled the "Black Bill", a "Draconian Law" and a device "designed to derail democratic functioning". Bihar Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra's carefully-planned amendments to Section 292 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Section 455 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), which he successfully pushed through the state legislature amid confusion on July 31, have suddenly assumed the proportions of a national controversy, with Mishra himself caught in a stormy confrontation with the media. The capital's press corps in a telling gesture of protest, decided to abstain from reporting, for one hour, the proceedings of both houses of Parliament. This they said was only the beginning.

The amendments to the two sections are a no-holds-barred assault on sections of the media that for long have irked Mishra and his government. And though the bill is still to cross two major hurdles—obtaining the assent of the state's governor, then the President of India—before it is incorporated in the statute books, if it gets through it could prove a major blow to free and fearless functioning of the media.

Specifically, the IPC amendment gives the state Government the authority to prevent the printing and publishing, "of grossly indecent or scurrilous matter or matters intended for blackmail". The loosely worded amendment, which applies to matter published in newspapers, periodicals or circulars, or exhibited, distributed or in any manner circulated, can be used against journalists, publishers, editors, distributing agents—which could mean wayside hawkers—and if taken to its logical extreme, even against readers of what the Government considers "grossly indecent", "scurrilous" or "blackmailing" matter.

Stringent Punishment: The CrPC has also been suitably amended to provide for stringent punishment. The offence has been made cognisable and non-bailable, thereby empowering the police to arrest any journalist and have him tried by an executive magistrate—a punishment more than that meted out to an assassin. If the crime is proved, the offender can be jailed up to two years with or without a fine, and if he repeats the offence he is liable to be jailed for up to five years with a fine.

The outcry in the national media against Mishra—who continues to stick to his guns (*see interview*)—emanates from not only its explosive content but equally the manner in which he had the amendments passed in the state legislature. Amid pandemonium in the Assembly House, and opposition benches hurling each other, the amendments were passed as the voice of the majority. Opposition leader Karpoori Thakur together with nine other MLA's, filed the Bihar High Court challenging the bill was passed when the Assembly in total disorder. Mishra, to prove days after the Bill was pushed through out full page advertisements in national dailies reproducing not only of the act but also of his lengthy in the legislature justifying the Bill ment that ironically, could hardly made in the four minutes it took the Bill.

Meanwhile journalists in Patna lised themselves in protest marches condemnations and appeals to the to restrain his sanction against minious amendments. Said Deep editor of *The Indian Nation*, Patna English language daily: "The bill obscene, scurrilous and intended mail (the press). The way it was was equally obscene and it has ra about the future of democracy freedom in the country." Added dan Jha Shastri, editor of the equa circulated Hindi daily *Aryavarta* ation in Bihar simply does not such a bill. The Government's challenged the authority of Council and clearly exhibits Mish ritarian tendencies."

By the time the national media cudgels, Mishra was so deeply in the controversy that, last fortn the entire press contingent walke press conference he had summoned Bhavan in New Delhi, while members stridently demanded discussion of the issues behind the floor of the Lok Sabha.

The bill also aroused sections of the ruling party. Ex sident Congress(I) MLA, Ashw Mishra, accused the chief minis leading party legislators. He alle chief minister had lied to parl when he claimed that "Union Information & Broadcasting had been consulted in the matter after this consultation the bill placed in the House." Predictably no comment forthcoming fr Sathe himself, though comm the Tamil Nadu ordinance in November he had admitted that

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...AGANNATH MISHRA

...eeing ...ellow

...AGANNATH Mishra, 48, ended his ... term as chief minister of corruption-... Bihar (1975-77) as a "friend of the ... because for most of his tenure he ... covered under the Emergency. Re-... to rule the state for a second term in ... 1980, he did not find the press as ... as he had expected. A series of ... began beginning with the gruesome ... of undertrials in ... (November-Dece-... 1980) to threats of re-... the infamous Urban ... Bank fraud case ... him probably led ... believe that the press ... only be controlled by ... tactics. INDIA ... Correspondent FAR-... AHMED *spoke to ... in Delhi last week ... the state legislature ... the controversial ... bill". Excerpts:*

Q. *What provoked you ... the "anti-press" ... in Bihar?*

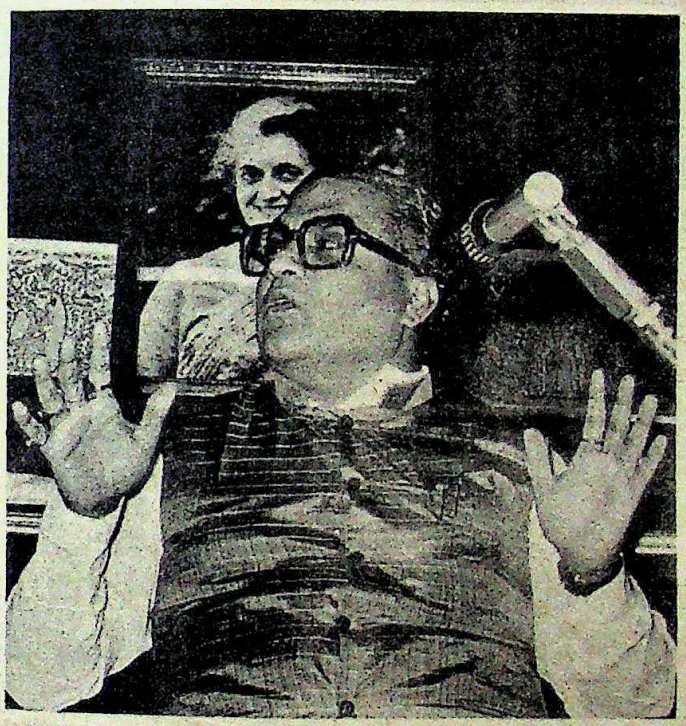
A. No immediate pro-... But what was hap-... in the state had ac-... pained me and my ... I have no grie-... against national pa-... journals but there ... phenomenal gro-... "yellow journalism" ... times. Some local ... and also others pub-... from places like ... and Allahabad are ... in scurrilous writ-... which demoralises the ... and sometimes amo-... blackmail. I thought ... character and ... are being affected. ... imperative to ... law. If I had not ... somebody else would have.

Q. *But there are already enough ... under the IPC and CrPC to ... journalists found guilty on these ...*

A. The existing law is weak and ... I think unless the offence is ... it would have no mean-... the existing laws do not afford the necessary protection to our citizens against scurrilous writing, destroying their character and reputation or against baseless reports that defame and assassinate character.

Q. *Even in murder cases it is the burden of the prosecution to prove that the accused is guilty but under the new press law it will be the burden of the accused to prove his innocence. Aren't you treating journalists worse than murderers?*

A. I think this is a wrong impression. The proposed law is a normal one. We did not try to do anything new or sudden. The amendments as passed by the Bihar Legislature were already in the statute book of Tamil Nadu and Orissa for about two decades. Our reasoning is that something which was done 22 years back in Tamil Nadu and 20 years ago in Orissa, against which no fingers were raised, should not be considered as a matter requiring fresh thinking.



HENS AYAVA SINGH

If I, as chief minister, am corrupt or if it is proved that I take a bribe, you are free to write about this. Moreover, there is a court of law and people are free to challenge the law if it is wrong.

Q. *How do you want to check newspapers and magazines published outside Bihar? What purpose do you want to achieve by making provisions for punishing even hawkers, sellers and readers of such material?*

A. The whole purpose is to check the growth of yellow journalism. The law would cover everything and sale or distribution of such scurrilous materials would be taken care of in Bihar. Such papers carrying indecent or scandalous materials would be banned in Bihar. The law provides for this.

Q. *There is a growing feeling that your whole purpose is to cover up corrupt ministers and officials and spread a kind of fear psychosis among journalists?*

A. This is not true. The Government has made it clear that anything written in good faith and which is not scurrilous in nature will not come under the purview of the law. Whatever is written with dignity and in respect of the conduct of public servants discharging their public functions and in respect of their character would not be covered under the law. This includes the chief minister, ministers and officials. If I, as chief minister, am corrupt or if it is proved that I take a bribe, you are free to write about this. Moreover, there is a court of law and people are free to challenge the law if it is wrong.

Q. *You are alleged to be motivated against the press as a whole. Is this why you first got the CrPc amended, vesting judicial powers with executive magistrates who would always be under the control of your government. And then you moved this bill, making the crime triable by executive magistrates only?*

A. We never said that only executive magistrates can try such cases. The law says "any magistrate" which also includes "judicial magistrates". There is also some misunderstanding regarding the clause "non-bailable". Under the CrPC classification "non-bailable" does not mean that bail cannot or will not be granted. It only means that bail is not automatically granted by the police and the competent court of law will have to apply its mind and decide whether the accused should be released on bail.

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and scurrilous are qualitative terms" unless they are defined.

Suspicious Motives: Mishra's explanations of what motivated him to undertake the exercise in the first place are that similar bills, cleared with the sanction of the President, have existed in Tamil Nadu since 1960 and in Orissa since 1962. Also, his continual harping on the fact that the bill will ensure the dignity of officials to be maintained and not obstruct their discharging of duties seem suspiciously like the clamourings of a man eager to silence a growing crusade of media investigations against his regime.

The war between Mishra and the Newspapers and Publications Ltd.—publishers of *The Indian Nation* and *Aryavarta*—for instance—is well known. It began when the *Indian Nation*, in September 1981, broke a story regarding an alleged probe by a Home Ministry team into various corruption charges against Mishra and his colleagues. Mishra filed a defamation suit, but a continuing spate of investigative reports in both papers has resulted in a slashing of their advertising quota. Mishra no doubt regards such exposures as prime examples of the "yellow journalism of one type and another," he claims, "is growing in the state." His bias against the local press is clear when he says: "In the large number of newspapers we studied and the variety of topics in respect of which the study was carried out, have proved many instances where reports were twisted."

One study he did carry out successfully was that of the Tamil Nadu Act XXV of 1960 which provides the state Government a similar lever to pressurise "antagonistic" sections of the media. In fact, in January last he dispatched a team of officials to Fort St George in Madras to go into the workings of the Tamil Nadu anti-press bill. These included Bihar's commissioner and joint secretary of the Home Department, the director of information and publicity and the legal adviser to the state Government.

THE TAMIL Nadu legislation, enhanced by the M.G. Ramachandran Government in September last, was promulgated first as an ordinance, then made into an act of the legislature, making imprisonment mandatory for scurrilous writing. As in the Bihar and Orissa amendments, the ordinance failed to define "scurrilous". Soon after the ordinance was promulgated, an order prohibited government officials from meeting the press or divulging information.

The chief minister found the bill handy to quash his rival M. Karunanidhi of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). Last year the police rounded up not only the editor but also the directors of a pro-DMK paper, *Ethiroli*. The offensive report in the paper that sparked off the arrest concerned a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) enquiry against the health minister in the MGR Government. Although pro-MGR dailies like *Anna* and *Neerottam* are said to be considerably more vituperative and slanderous towards their opponents, no arrests among their staff have taken place.

Many media columnists see in the growing acceptance of the act, an oblique assent by the Central Government. Says political commentator A.S. Abraham in *The Times of India*: "....perhaps because it can try to get the press into line without having to make a frontal and politically costly legislative assault on it, the Central Government prefers to let the states try to secure the same objective through direct legislation, and to face the music." Adds Supreme Court lawyer and former attorney-general Soli Sorabjee: "It (the bill) is a further inroad against the freedom of the press. But if the bill becomes law it can—and should—be challenged in the Supreme Court."

Journalists demonstrating in the capital: widespread protest

Protest: As the controversy grows into a national protest virtually all the journalists' organisations in the capital have denounced the "anti-press" bill, organisations like the Indian & Eastern Newspaper Society (IENS) have appealed to the President not to accede to the bill, and Rajya Sabha MP and Editor of the *Hindustan Times*, Khushwant Singh who is usually sympathe... cause of the ruling party, said ... bill became law it will extinguish ... ing flame of press freedom in ... This is not the way the Govern... stamp out yellow journalism." ... pointed out already most new... adequately harassed because of ... filed in various places, and the ... would only increase such blacke...

The Government itself took ... line, especially in Parliament. ... Minister R. Venkataraman: "The ... has not been received by the C... assent of the President."

Meanwhile, a three-member ... Editors' Guild of India, made a ... ney to Patna to confer with ... leaders. The three-member team ... of Arun Shourie of ... *Express*, K.R. ... *Organiser* and K. ... the *Daily Pratap*, ... minister, MP's, MLA's ... lists in Patna to ... hard-hitting analysis ... The team's encou... Mishra clearly prov... chief minister ha... stantive basis to ... bill.

Not only, argue... report, are the key ... bill left deliberately ... offences made non-... the fact that offen... are to be tried only ... magistrates—as o... judicial magistra... function under the ... —who are under ... and direction of the ... Mishra Government ... the design succeeds ... will surely be replicated in o... argue members of the Editors' ... have decided to challenge it in ... Court if the bill becomes an act.

The protest was so widesp... became imperative for New D... official opinion. Ninety of ... MLA's—many from the ruling p... a memorandum to the prime m... the Central Government to re... bill. At the same time, the Tam... Court admitted two writ petitio... ing the validity of the Act. The ... may prove crucial—both at the ... in the courts—for the media's ... pendence. Memories of the Em... the slow encroachments on p... under the present regime, may ... uniting a linguistically and ... parate media into taking up a ...

—SUNIL SETHI with FARZAND A...

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That's 1 more than any other gas stove!)

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CIGARETTE SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

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Farmers' Champion

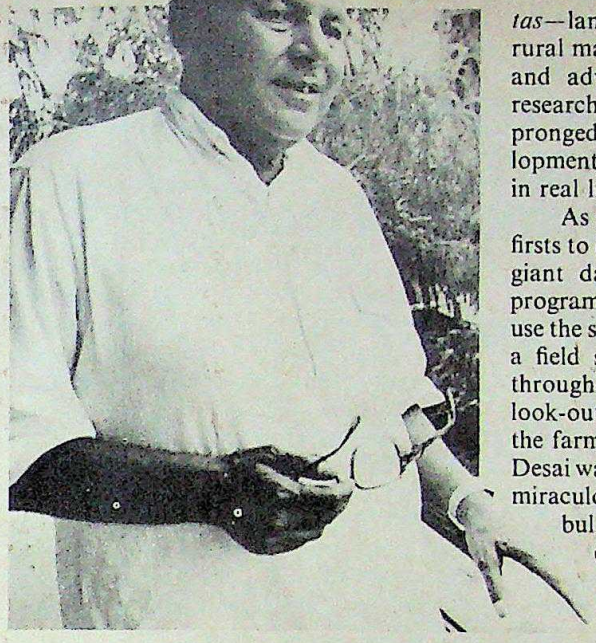
Well deservedly, this year's awards of the Ramon Magsaysay Awards for Community Leadership and Peace went to two Indians—Chandi Prasad and Manibhai Bhimbhai Desai. Sunderlal Bhatt, an Indian environmentalist, pioneered the Chipko Andolan for conservation in the Garhwal region was profiled in INDIA TODAY *in a report on the destruction of forests ('A Double-edged Axe', March 15). To meet Desai, Chief* CHANDER UDAY SINGH *journeyed to Uruli Kanchan, headquarters of the Grammas Bharatiya Agro-Industries Foundation (BAIF) near Pune. His report:*

THE DIRT road that branches off the Pune-Sholapur highway shows few signs of the greenery which Uruli Kanchan has become famous for. Two kilometres off the highway, after a bend and a tiny grape plantation, the parched undulations give way to lush green bounded by 423 acres of verdant land. The campus of the BAIF is a modern potentate's dream. Growing on rocky inhospitable land which it is, the kubabul trees are visible proof of a doctrine propounded by the BAIF for over 15 years now: that the resources of land, water, animal and man must be brought together to form an economically viable whole.

Dr Manibhai Desai has achieved what social workers in the country have only dreamed of. Today, the BAIF set up by the Mahatma Gandhian comprises of a sprawling network of agricultural and dairy research centres with a unique extension system that takes their findings to over five lakh families and one lakh cows in five states.

Desai's missionaries minutely monitor projects spread over an area of 1 lakh km on motor cycles provided to them by the organisation. And each of his workers in the rural masses has undergone similar training in institutions to become a premier one of its kind.

Starting from Desai's work in rural development has been amazing. Set up only 15 years ago, and really gained momentum in the mid-'70s. Using available resources to the utmost, Desai and his team of 600 multi-purpose researchers have concentrated on upgrading non-productive scrub cows by cross-breeding with prize bulls. The 80,000 cross-breeds which have reached the milking stage, produce an average of 2,300 litres of milk per lactation. To date BAIF's upgrading programme has resulted in at least 16 crore litres of milk production, and by 1985 this figure will be much higher.



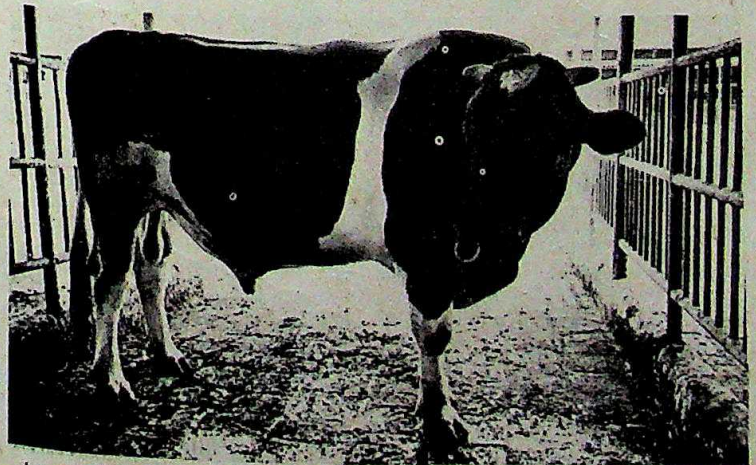
Desai: amazing projects

Integrated Effort: "But ours is not a cattle development programme," says the khadi-clad social worker forcefully, "it is a human development programme which believes that you cannot raise the poverty-stricken millions unless you put in their hands technologically superior instruments which will give them gainful employment. My aim is to re-establish a meaningful relationship between the *Pancha Mahabhutas*—land, water, plants, animals and our rural man—by using the latest technologies and advances." To achieve this, Desai's research efforts are directed on a multi-pronged level which takes every new development to the field where it can be tested in real life conditions.

As a result, BAIF has had a long line of firsts to its credit. Beating the Government's giant dairy institutions and development programmes, Desai's outfit was the first to use the superior frozen semen technology on a field scale, eventually spreading its use throughout the country. Constantly on the look-out for back-up crops which can help the farmer once he has his cross-bred cow, Desai was also the first to introduce the near-miraculous giant Hawaiian tree, the kubabul, which combines more desirable qualities than would seem possible. Having seen BAIF's success with the tree, in fact, the Government organised a huge seminar for 140 workers and forestry officials at Uruli Kanchan so that they could emulate it on a national level.

Most importantly, BAIF was the first rural development agency in the country to literally take its programme to the farmer's doorstep. Explained Dr M.R. Marathe, a close associate of Desai's who handles future plans and project development in the decentralised organisation: "Previously facilities like artificial insemination were offered at government veterinary centres, and the farmer had to go there to avail of them. But the net effect of this was that the cow stayed put in the village and the veterinary officer stayed put in his centre, and the two never met. The overwhelming response which we have received is in a large part due to the fact that our motor bike veterinarians go to the farmer rather than expecting him to come to them."

Impressive Growth: Today Desai's BAIF is a huge rural development organisation with a total investment of over Rs 6 crore in research centres, bull farms, and development schemes. Five hundred motor cycles ply a daily 45,000 km out of 300 integrated development centres in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, and two more states will soon be added to the list. Working in close contact with the Planning Commission, state governments, sugar and milk cooperatives, and the governments of France and Denmark, the organisation is already involved in advanced stages of research in embryo transfer, animal breeding, forestry, fod-



A prize Holstein-Freisian bull at Uruli Kanchan: high-level breeding

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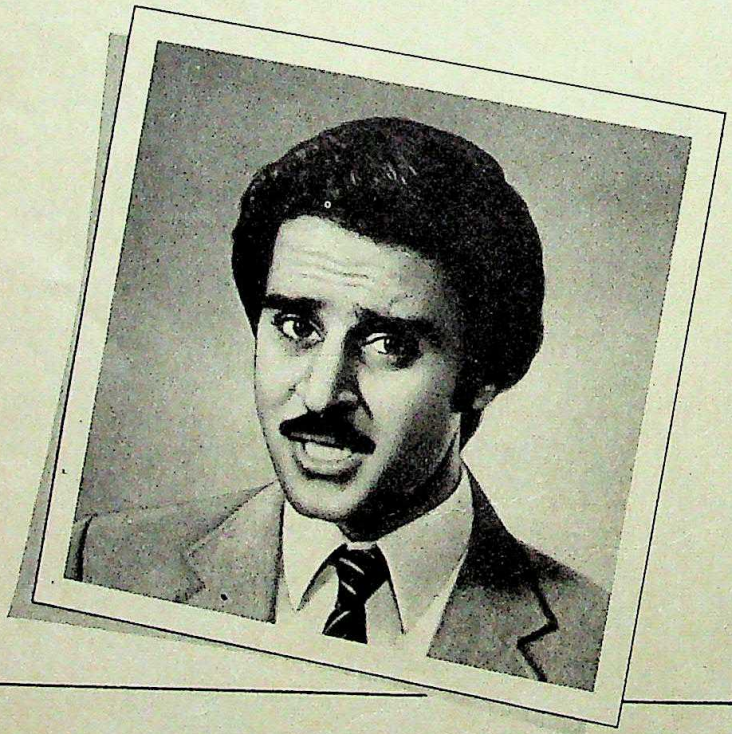
"I don't believe a well worn passport
is a symbol of success.
Nor even the number of credit cards
in a wallet.
I believe in an appearance
that's personal.
A look that says it all without
having to say a word...



But first,
a super-smooth shave
to give me the edge."

Erasmic Supreme
The blade with the diamond edge.

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...gement, energy recycling, water ...management, dry land farming, ...l health. An ultra-modern phar... ...s plant set up by him produces ...s of vaccines to combat deadly ...mouth diseases, and other vaccines ...g of lesser animal illnesses. In the ...ture the organisation hopes to put ...huge new research campuses at an ...e cost of Rs 22 crore, for which ...have given him 2,500 acres of ...ction the Central Government ...ved a giant field research pro... ...hich will be conducted by BAIF at a ...9 crore.

...esai's outfit at Uruli Kanchan has ...been the giant research organisa... ...become today. When, 36 years ...hai Bhimbhai Desai was brought ...to Uruli Kanchan and told to ...of making the villagers self-suffi... ...llage, 34 km from Pune, was a ...ght-ridden habitation surrounded ...rocky land. Desai, who had left ...rious life of a rich Surat farmer to ...in jail during the Quit India ...in 1942, promptly set about fulfil... ...ther's wishes. Taking Rs 1 lakh ...Sabarmati Ashram, Desai started ...ure centre and a skill training ...h today teaches 2,800 students ...ages.

...ESSING that he had merely ...owed Gandhi's edict, Desai's ...tographic memory traces his ...terest with dry land and scrub ...h he saw as the unutilised re... ...India's rural world. Bent on ...y Indian cows produce less milk, ...dissecting every dead cow he came ...personally dissected more than ...recalls an associate. "He would ...ll boy holding huge medical ...h side and this is how he learned ...e physiology of the cow." The ...off richly: when Desai formed ...of 100 cows from Gujarat, his ...e national milk yield awards for ...ming. As early as 1957 he was ..."Gopal Ratna" for his research ...duction. Characteristically, the ...in committing his life to rural ...had taken a vow of celibacy ...and thus owned no material ...ngings—refused to accept the ...it was given to his organisation ...to him as an individual.

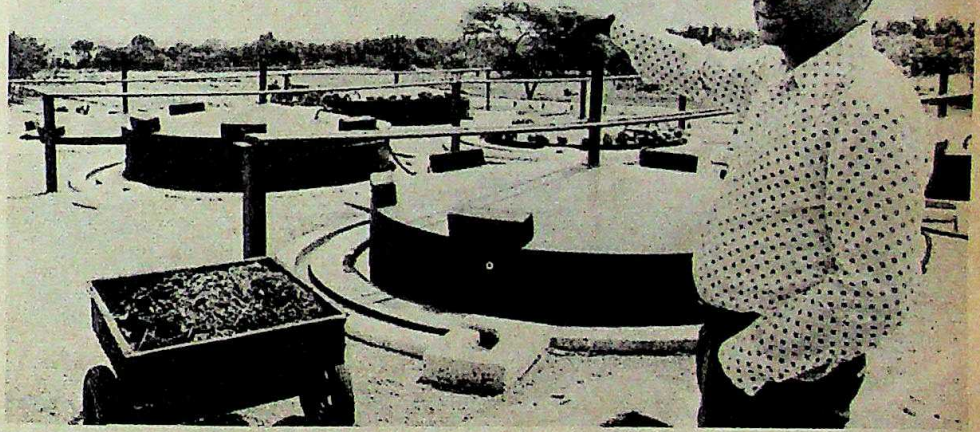
...has not till he set up BAIF in 1967 ...ally started reaching out to the ...more in his efforts to teach them ...ecy. Given 100 acres of Uruli ...ed for a dairy project, Desai ...cleus herd of Danish Holstein-...Jersey cows, with which he launched his initial cross-breeding programme. Today the BAIF has a prime herd of 630 pure-breds which are used to produce top quality bulls, and in addition manages two herds of 1,000 and 600 cross-breds for cooperatives in Nasik and Ahmednagar.

Multi-purpose Tree: When he took up the kubabul tree for research, it was meant primarily as a support system for a poor farmer who needs fodder. But researchers at BAIF found that the tree was far more than a mere fodder crop, and could become a multi-purpose tree for farmers who could derive timber, pulp, dyes, gum and nitrogen-rich fodder from it. In the two years since large-scale planting of the three has begun, more than 1,000 acres of kubabul have already been sown. Using what he calls the "last unpolluted segment of society" to propagate kubabul in the Uruli Kanchan areas, Desai in 1980 started distributing saplings to students so that they would plant and tend for them. The experiment has been a stupendous success. In the last two years, students of Uruli Kanchan's Mahatma Gandhi Vidyalaya have planted three lakh saplings with an unprecedentedly high survival rate.

It is precisely this kind of motivation which makes for Desai's successes. Field research officers (FRO's) in his organisation are kept at a perpetually keyed up state of "orientation" which starts with an intensive six-month training stint at Uruli Kanchan before they are sent to the integrated centres and on annual reorientation trips to the central office. "The man who is not technically qualified is not on the rolls of BAIF," says Desai proudly. "I don't believe that wearing a dhoti and kurta, and practising abstinence qualifies you for social service."

BAIF's management systems would be the envy of most private sector organisations. While each FRO is allowed virtual autonomy in handling his centre, a tight managerial format ensures that everybody does his job. Twenty-five centres make a zone, headed by a zonal officer, and four zones a region. On a fixed day each month, zonal meetings are held, at which each FRO details his performance during the month comparative to the previous years.

Systemised Monitoring: Every cow and calf at the 300 centres is card-catalogued and information on inseminations, pregnancies, calvings and illnesses are compiled on a central computer at Uruli Kanchan. With the detailed case histories of eight lakh cows and three lakh cross-breds already on his computer, Desai has the most extensive computerised cross-referencing for cattle in India, and possibly in the world. As a result of systemised monitoring, BAIF's record of inseminations and conceptions is unparalleled in India. Compared to the national average of 70 per cent failed inseminations, BAIF has had only 51 per cent.



A BAIF administration officer points to their giant gobar gas plant: no waste

At month's end, Manibhai Desai will leave for Manila to receive the $20,000 (Rs 1.8 lakh) Magsaysay award, but is surprisingly unassuming about it. Crediting Gandhi for inspiring him to take up the cause of the rural poor, he continues to pass off most of his inspirations as a mere follow-up of "Bapuji's" instructions. But the modesty is misleading, for even as he goes to receive the award, Desai will be putting into operation plans which will catapult BAIF into a giant country-wide network. The seven new research campuses will coordinate with a string of rural development centres manned by FROs; a water resource development centre will work on conservation and bunding of rain water for year-round local irrigation; and the campuses will launch an ambitious project for educating the beneficiaries of BAIF's cattle projects to show them methods of economic improvement and self-sufficiency.

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

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Rishi Kapoor and Padmini Kolhapure in *Prem Rog*: skilful direction

PREM ROG
Director: Raj Kapoor
Starring: Rishi Kapoor, Padmini Kolhapure, Nanda, Shammi Kapoor and Kulbhushan Kharbanda

IT IS a return to Raj Kapoor's favourite theme, a strong new statement by the high priest of cinematic melodrama. Giving in to his recurrent obsession with forbidden love, after a near-disastrous deviation in *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*, Kapoor's latest film *Prem Rog* takes one back to *Bobby* and over three decades of RK hits about star-crossed lovers—Romeo and Juliet stories about true love which braves all to eventually emerge triumphant.

Prem Rog is a nostalgic throw-back to Kapoor's reformist social dramas of the late '50s—the central thread of the film is an unflinching indictment of the maltreatment of widows in rural India. Around this is woven a convincing story of a love which battles the rich versus poor barrier, exposing in its path the hypocrisy of parents who would sacrifice their daughter only to keep the family flag flying. Using every cinematic cliché in the book, and characters who are pure caricature, he manages nonetheless to put together a moving tale.

The pubescent daughter of a village Thakur (Kulbhushan Kharbanda), Manorama (Padmini Kolhapure) is spoilt silly by the fabulously wealthy joint family she lives in. When childhood friend Deodhar (Rishi Kapoor), orphaned ward of the village *pujari*, returns from the city where he is studying medicine, Manorama promptly monopolises all his time with her childish pranks and prattling. Love comes early in the movie to Deodhar, but it is clear that Manorama, for all her friendliness, cannot even see the impoverished orphan as anything more than a childhood playmate. But even this one-sided romance is short-lived, as marriage is soon arranged for Manorama with a Thakur, even richer than her father.

Tragic Turn-about: The marriage takes place and a heart-broken Deodhar leaves for the city, and a tragic and all too predictable twist takes place. Manorama's husband dies in a jeep crash and what follows is a turn-about in the girl's fortunes. The widow is soon demoted from [illegible] harassed widow—victimised, [illegible] pushed into the life of enforced [illegible] deprivation which is considered [illegible] for widows. Although her *bhabhi* [illegible] spirited attempt at giving her a [illegible] from the taunts and jibes which are piled onto widows, this too ends when Manorama is caught alone brother-in-law and raped.

Finally, learning of his [illegible] plight, Deodhar rushes back to the help her in her misery, only to against the combined opposition lagers, her family, and even herself—all of whom believe that the only lot of the widow. Deodhar severes, spending every moment Manorama and earns regular beatings the villagers and Manorama's family troubles. Determined to uphold the of their *gharana*, the Thakurs [illegible] that the widowed Manorama will marry. The tension builds up, till confrontation when rapist brother gets together with opportunist family to bump off Deodhar.

It is only Raj Kapoor's skilful which makes sense of an otherwise melodramatic story. Handling the ment of the central theme and currents superbly, he makes even improbable situations seem plausible handling of Deodhar's one-sided Manorama and her belated recognition are handled sensitively and the earth-shattering love scenes so Hindi cinema.

Kapoor's casting is, for the since *Bobby*, impeccable. Kolhapure gic heroine, Rishi Kapoor as devoted lover, Kharbanda and Nanda as scheming Thakurs and Shammi as benign patriarch, and Sulochana Nanda and Tanuja as thakurains superb in their roles. Even Ghatge, who plays Kolhapure's husband, manages to put in a [illegible] acting after so many years out of After the non-acting in *Satyam Sundaram*, Kapoor's *Prem Rog* breath of fresh air.

But *Prem Rog* suffers from fault that has been the undoing of Kapoor films in the past—loss Bent on including a few touches office, he has brought in a [illegible] fluous humour scenes which add the movie. Additionally, a [illegible] dream sequence and a song in the of Holland adds 10 minutes of an otherwise interesting movie.

—CHANDER

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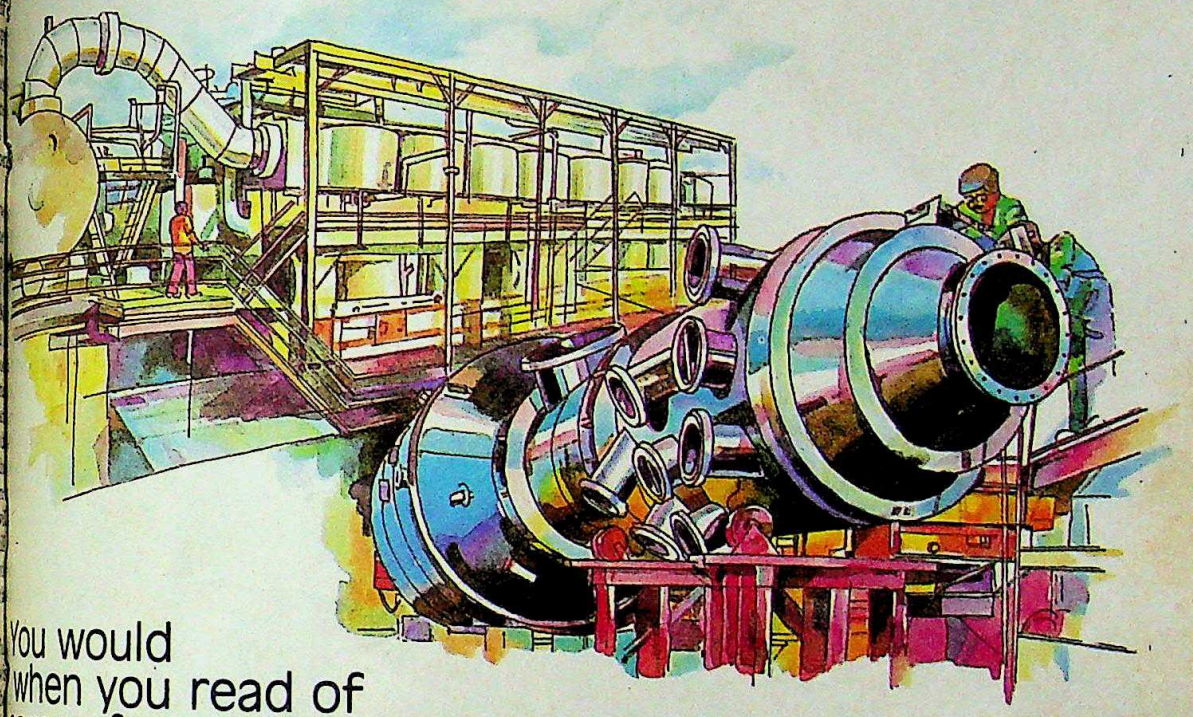

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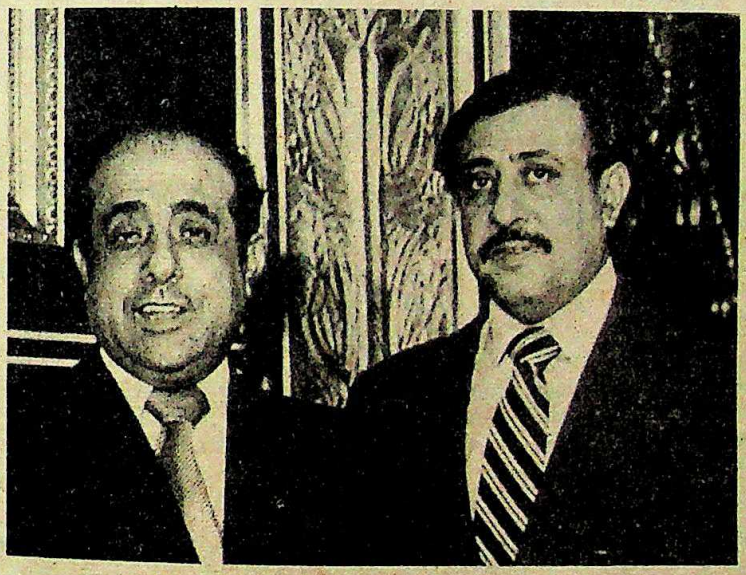
...ON 321 of the Criminal Proce... Code (CrPC) is a magical clause ...which the state can appropriate ...of an indulgent uncle and grant ...alleged criminals by dropping ...against them. With changes in ..., yesterday's offender can em... today's persecuted angel, that is if ...right side of the new regime. ...year, the Union Government ap... case to seek, and get, permission ...criminal proceedings against ...businessmen of Dubai—Abdul ...dari, Abdul Latif Galadari and ...ab Galadari—all of whom had ...ted in cases of gold and silver ...of Bombay (INDIA ...ber 31, 1981). But ...e Court is not amu... to the embarrass... Galadaris' powerful ...ruling party, it has ...the issue of withdra... cases. The Galadaris' ...ll appear before a ...bench this fortnight ...on a petition that ...r all times to come ...prerogative of such ...rgiveness.

...rous **Amnesty:** ...l leave petition was ...fore the Supreme ...Narain Dass Pan... executive secretary of ...r Democracy, an ...ption action group ...the Gandhi Peace ...n. The petition called ...on the very basis of the Govern... ...ing of amnesty to the Galadaris. ...hen the public prosecutor moved ...r withdrawal of the cases, he ...the Galadaris should not be ...against because the Union ...had decided to drop the charges ...ent of friendly relations between ...d India".

...a's argument is that the Gala... ...d in no case be let off the hook ...alleged smugglers, and abscon... ...e shown "utter contempt for ...icial process in India". He was ...the three brothers' rather ...r track record in India: Wahab ...d a Rs 2 lakh bail during ...in 1972 while Rahim and Latif ...eady declared as absconders. ...petition pointedly said "it is ...that the Government of the UAE has made it a condition of their friendship and economic cooperation with India" that the cases against the Galadaris should be dropped. "If such a suggestion has been made, its acceptance is a national disgrace," Pancholi stated.

Allegations Denied: The petition also sought to absolve the earlier Janata government of the charge—first aired by Mrs Gandhi in the Parliament last year—that it is the Morarji Desai regime that had initiated the process of withdrawal of cases against the Galadaris. Pancholi stated that it was during the Janata period that the Galadaris wanted to come back to India and sent covert suggestions that the cases be dropped.



Abdul Rahim and Abdul Latif: powerful friends

"The Government refused to withdraw the cases though it readily agreed to issue visas to them (Galadaris) because that was the only way they would come back to India and face the pending prosecution. Very naturally they neither obtained visas nor turned up."

The Pancholi petition comes in the wake of long sojourns in India by Latif and Wahab, representing the three brothers' two different corporations with assets all over the world and believed to be worth two billion dollars. Early this year, Latif, who had spent long childhood years in Bombay, ventured further afield to West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh, met the barons of the local chambers of commerce and left promises of a bonanza of Arab investment.

Last month, Justice O. Chinnappa Reddy and Justice A.P. Sen of the Supreme Court agreed that there was a prima facie case in Pancholi's petition and ordered that notices be issued in papers published from Dubai summoning the Galadaris, or their representatives, to the court by the second week of August. It gave rise to a piquant situation as the two leading English dailies of the emirate—*Gulf News* and *Khalij Times*—are owned by the Galadaris.

Legal Implications: As court officials were busy planning a suitable channel in Dubai for putting up the notice, the Galadaris themselves ended the suspense by authorising the Bombay-based solicitors' firm, Mulla and Mulla, to represent them in court. The firm's New Delhi representative, Lalit Bhasin, the cherub-faced lawyer who is also a Congress(I) enthusiast, agreed to appear on the day of hearing.

Talking to INDIA TODAY, Bhasin regretted that the petition might come in the way of his clients' investment proposals in India for "who will invest in a country that is hell-bent on prosecuting you on decade-old cases". He was gearing up for what he described as a "tough battle". His prime weapon is the judgement delivered by the Supreme Court itself on the famous Baroda Dynamite case, involving George Fernandes and instituted by Mrs Gandhi's government during the Emergency. Later on the Supreme Court allowed the Janata government to drop the prosecution against Fernandes, but attached the rider that such permission could be granted only for "appropriate social, economic and political purposes sans Tammany Hall enterprises".

But Pancholi's lawyers are out to prove that the withdrawal of the Galadari cases was born purely out of Tammany Hall enterprises. The petition described the much-touted story of "economic cooperation" between India and the UAE as a "concoction" aimed at covering up "an act of nepotism". The petition daringly mentioned that "crores have changed hands".

The outcome of the Galadari case may also influence the course of a similar case now before the Supreme Court involving the Bihar Chief Minister, Jagannath Mishra. In Mishra's case, the state Government is required to justify the dropping a charge of criminal misappropriation of funds against him soon after he became the chief minister. If the court takes a tough stand on both the cases, the state's executive privilege of granting pardon to favourites will come to an end and the past sins of political bigwigs will come home to roost. —SUMIT MITRA

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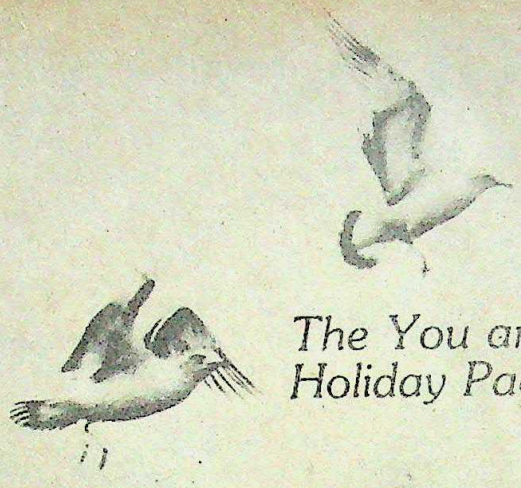

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r Games

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GEORGE Orwell's *1984*, Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock* and Sir John Hackett's *The Third World War* have become classics of our times and it is obvious that the formula all three employed—highly realistic if apocalyptic views on what the ...ably held in store—was a ...se. Now, Indian defence analyst ...e 35, makes his literary debut ...e formula but within narrower ... Rikhye's *The Fourth Round* ...ches a Hackett-type futuristic ...t once again locks India and ... a mutually-destructive battle of

...s guilty of over-confidence or ... perhaps both by labelling the ...e history" rather than fiction. ...oks have three things going for ... that there is an abundance of ... both sides of the border, in ... out, who have no doubt that an ... war is unavoidable and are ... preparing for it. Secondly, the ... of new and deadly toys that both ... avidly collecting is invariably ...ed by an uncontrollable urge to ... Finally, the uncertain current state ... between the two neighbours ... put Rikhye's book well within ... of possibility.

... context, Rikhye's book offers ...od for thought. The author ...bject well enough to produce an ...alistic account of what could ...Indo-Pak war were to erupt in ...rsion of the event that triggers ... pre-emptive strike by India at ...nuclear set-up at Kahuta—is, ... Indian Government's pious ...ently plausible. So is his ...t any future war with Pakistan ...e longer, more intense, more ...mal than any of the previous ... *Fourth Round* lasts 36 days ...e of the Kahuta pre-emptive ...ease-fire. At the end of the war, ... entrenched in 2,000 sq km of ...ory while Indian troops occupied 18,000 sq km in Pakistan. The death toll was more or less the same on both sides with a very high level of civilian casualties and widespread economic disruption on both sides of the border. India, however, clearly comes out the loser, both in terms of material loss as well as prestige.

Missing Elements: Technically, *The Fourth Round* traverses the fringes of reality, but it contains some serious flaws. For one, Rikhye has virtually ignored the human factor. Military equipment is only as good as the men who use it and in India's previous wars, many of the major reverses were the result of senior officers who either panicked, made wrong decisions or were short-circuited by political interference. Rikhye's account is glaringly bereft of the human factor and though he substitutes imaginary names for minor characters in the plot, the actual men issuing orders in the field are generally faceless robots which is a jarring aberration.

Rikhye also has an uncontrollable tendency to inject bits of farcical humour into the story which is clearly uncalled for and irrelevant considering the seriousness of the subject. Rikhye is also unfair on the Indian Army when he states that they stuck to World War II British tactics of massing men and material in a set-piece battle. The Indian Army certainly clings stubbornly to traditions inherited from the British but their tactics have undoubtedly been tailored to modern, highly mobile warfare, at least as far as their peace-time exercises are concerned. Even so, Rikhye makes some telling points. One is the fact that inter-services rivalry played no mean role in many of the losses suffered by India, particularly in terms of the Air Force's insistence on keeping aircraft and air operations under their tight control, thus leaving the navy and army highly vulnerable. The other is his theory, and one that many analysts would support, is that India's battlefield potential takes time to develop, thus giving them an initial disadvantage difficult to recover.

It is, however, obvious that many of Rikhye's views echo those regularly put out by his friends at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, particularly the threat of the US coming to Pakistan's aid with combat troops and equipment and the Soviet's hesitation in doing the same for India. But even so, Rikhye has produced a book that is of value, not just to military strategists and the men in uniform but to the average reader concerned about the war cries emanating from both sides. Hopefully, *The Fourth Round* will serve as a deterrent, however, minor, to the death and glory boys who think war with Pakistan is the final solution and that India will emerge relatively unscathed if it does happen.

—DILIP BOBB

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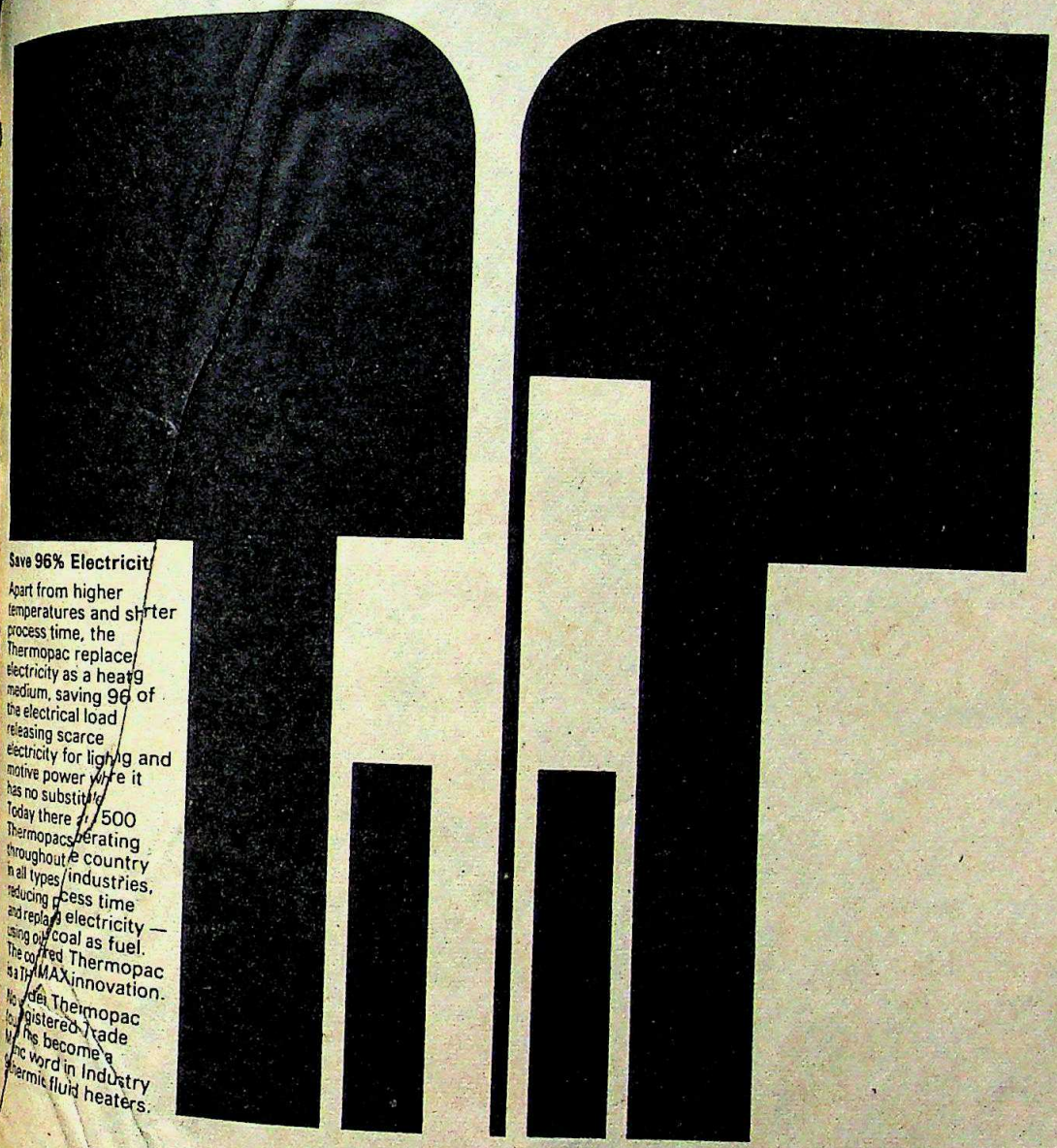

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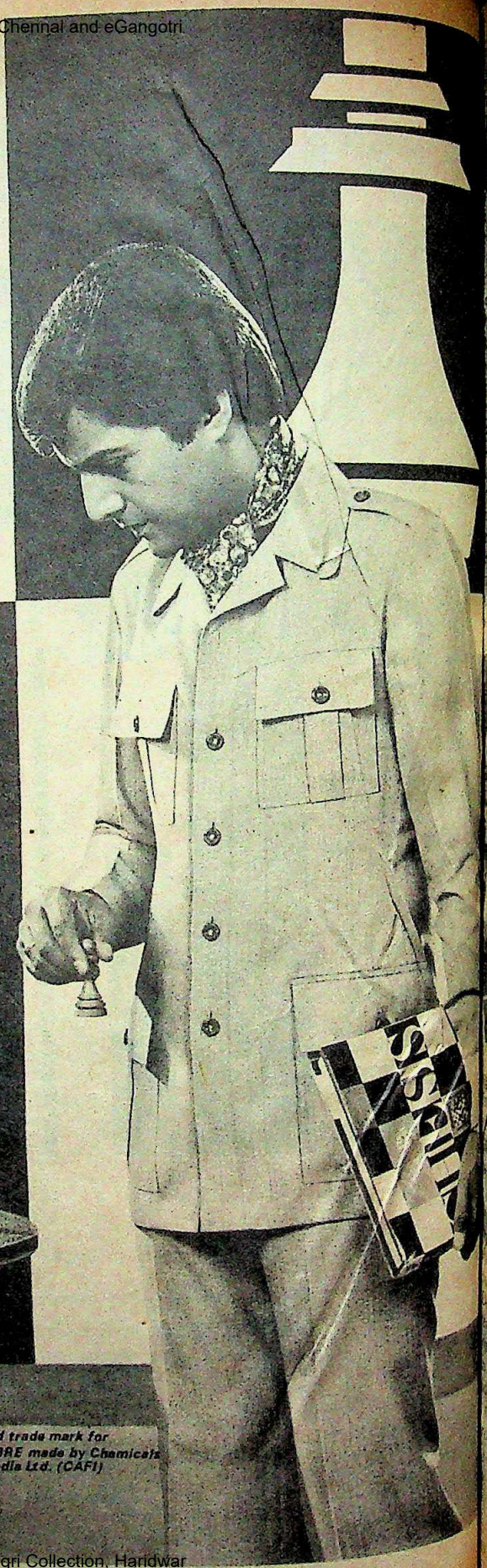

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peedy Sell Out

...SBI was unprecedented but ...d. What was not expected was ...ed rate at which tickets for the ...Asiad which went on sale last ...e capital, vanished. Within a ...w hours of opening the eleven ...ratha (SBI)ticket sale counters ...and "sold out" signs put up in ...housands of irate buyers had to ...ty-handed when the first two ...ale of Asiad tickets concluded ...three hours after the selling ...d. The disappearing act con... ...s sold in 88 cities across the ...the same fate two days later. ...a SBI spokesman: "We were ...limited number of tickets and ...n 70 per cent of prospective ...ng the disappointed who were ...included prominent members ...ession parties. ...ility on the part of the ...soon turned into an un... ...when they accused both ...Special Organising ...y and the SBI officials of ...tickets' and encouraging ...s. In fact, the Rs 100 ...tickets were sold for over ...r the SBI announced the ...ers. SBI's South Extension ...ch which had closed the ...ered sales later on when ...ved 50 tickets from the ...Though the SBI's officials ...ect as a minor lapse, they ...e tickets given to them ...ugh the SBI's windows. ...Kamal Singh Bains, ...

AGSOC's additional secretary general, it was decided to reserve 10 per cent tickets for each category of MLA's and MP's, sports organisations and window sales at the last minute, without discussing the exact number of tickets. Bains further added that 70 per cent of the total stadia capacity was offered for sale through the SBI.

Large-scale Bungling: In all, over 2,25,000 tickets per game per day will be available for sales and total revenue expected from the sale is around Rs 1.50 crore. AGSOC has also decided to allot the number of tickets on the basis of population of the state, popularity of a particular game in that state and the distance from Delhi—which means states like Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Sikkim and others were given minimum number of tickets. Delhi, it was decided earlier, would get 50 per cent of the total tickets to be sold. This break-up, however, provided a clue to the large-scale bungling in the ticket distribution.

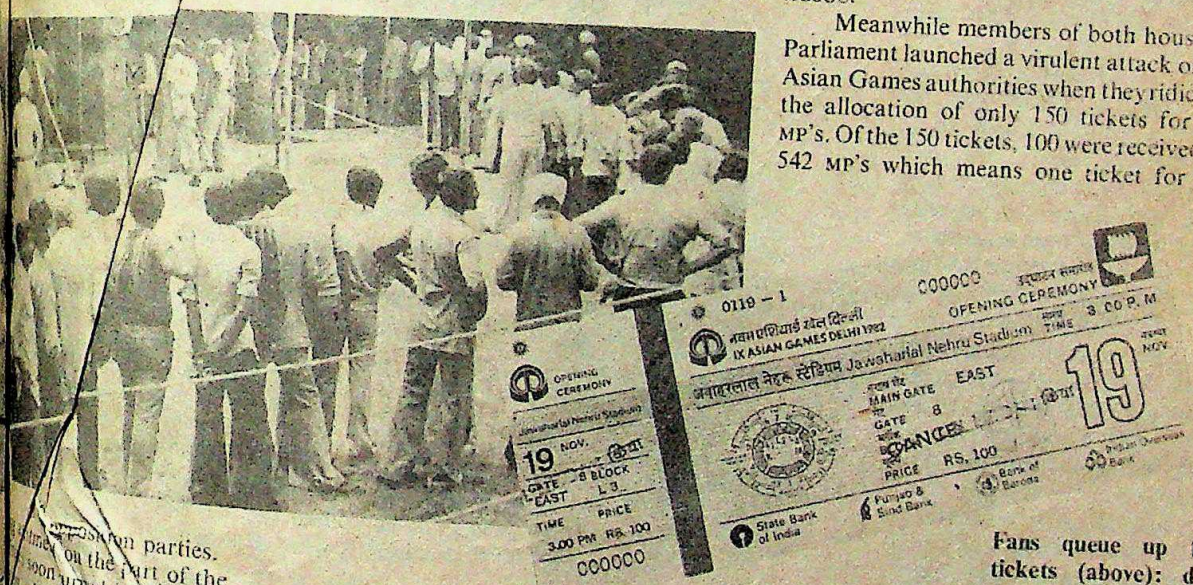
Given AGSOC's official version that Delhi was allotted 45 per cent of the total revenue earning tickets for each game day for each stadia, SBI's 11 counters would have received a total of 23,500 tickets for the opening ceremony at Jawahar lal Stadium (capacity 75,000), 70,875 tickets for the nine-day swimming and volley ball event at Indraprastha Stadium (capacity 25,000 and to be split for volley ball and badminton), 18,900 for 10-day swimming event at Talkatora pool (capacity 6,000), 6,615 for seven-day boxing at Hall of Sports (capacity 3,000), 12,600 for five-day rowing competition at Jaipur's Ramgarh Lake and 1,890 tickets for archery at Delhi University Ground (capacity 3,000).

With rules permitting sale of a complicated ticket-mix to each buyer, exact time required for selling all the tickets could not be worked out. But according to a sports organisation of official, even if each centre was given only 2,100 opening ceremony tickets, it would have taken them at least 1,050 minutes (17.5 hours) at the rate of one minute per person (each buyer was allowed two tickets) to sell. But curiously all the tickets were sold out within two to three hours. Says a senior Finance Ministry official, whose personnel staff could not procure tickets: "Quick closure of sales counters proves only that either all the tickets meant for 'sale in Delhi' were not actually released or were sold to few chosen people in wholesale." AGSOC officials remained silent on this specific charge. "There has been no black-marketing of any magnitude," commented Shankaran Nair, secretary-general of the AGSOC.

Meanwhile members of both houses of Parliament launched a virulent attack on the Asian Games authorities when they ridiculed the allocation of only 150 tickets for 782 MP's. Of the 150 tickets, 100 were received for 542 MP's which means one ticket for five persons. The authorities had earlier claimed that 7,500 tickets for the opening ceremony were set aside for 4,500-odd MP's and MLA's.

Sensing trouble, Buta Singh, AGSOC's chairman, postponed the sale of tickets for MP's and directed his senior officials to personally supervise selling during the remaining three rounds, to be completed by August 29. Singh and his senior officials have yet to evolve a fool-proof method by which they could prevent 'cornering of tickets'. Admitted an official, incharge of tickets: "With every buyer claiming connections with the high command, you can't expect us to stick our neck out." The Asian Games after all is not the sole prerogative of genuine sports-lovers but those with the right connections.

—PRABHU CHAWLA



Fans queue up for tickets (above): disappointment in store

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Khan and Sen in happier days: divorced

■ Modelling may be a glamorous career but the strain sometimes can get too much, as **Nandini Sen**, 25, can willingly testify. Last fortnight, Sen went through her second marital break-up when she was officially granted a divorce from her actor husband **Mazhar Khan**. In her divorce petition, Sen, who has been a top model for nearly a decade, alleged that the marriage had not been consummated and was therefore null and void. Meanwhile Khan, whose sole cinematic effort in *Shaan* did little for his fledgling career, was losing no time in making wedding plans of his own with actor Dilip Kumar's niece. Sen, who refused to comment on the break-up on the plea that it was "a private affair" intends to carry on modelling with a little help from her teenage looks to support her son Sahil and enjoy the freedom of being a single girl once again.

■ Though largely unsung back home, the Festival of India in Britain seems to be periodically giving exposure to some interesting and talented new stars. One of them, **Malavika Sarukkai**, 23, an Odissi dancer, has just created minor history by becoming the youngest dancer to perform at the prestigious Queen Elizabeth Hall in London as part of the Festival of India cavalcade. Sarukkai, who has just returned after a hectic fortnight's trip to London for her performance, was dazzled by the enthusiastic response to her dancing. "I never thought people abroad would understand anything about the dance but the response was terrific and the audience intelligent." For the attractive almond-eye dancer, London wasn't a round of discos and night-clubs. "My dancing is my only and total commitment," she insists, "I couldn't survive a minute of the *de rigeur* or jet-set life." With that kind of commitment, Sarukkai, obviously intends to

Sarukkai: terrific response

be around for a long time and is highly critical of Indian classical dancers who carry on long after their body has given out. "It's painful to watch them drag their bodies onto the stage," she says with all the outspoken confidence of her youth.

■ By the time she was in her teens, she was gliding away with beauty queen crowns and, for an encore, she topped her M.A. History course with honours. But for sleek, svelte **Kanwal Thakur Singh**, sister of film star Kiran Thakur Singh, beauty and brains just wasn't enough. By last fortnight, her trophy case was overflowing with medals won on a totally different battleground—the badminton court.

Singh is currently sweating it out on the courts in preparation for the Asiad selections but has already established herself as one of India's top women badminton stars. She walked away with a bronze medal at the last Commonwealth Games in Canada and her coach, D. K. Mukherjee, sees greater things in her future. "She is very hard-working and she is going to be around for a long time," he predicts. Lovers of the game sincerely hope so too.

Singh: all set for the ASIAD

■ Africans are not usually associated with Hindu religious rites in an Indian temple. But that is exactly what **Marimuthu Kistensamy**, who [illegible] name is a South [illegible] currently engaged [illegible] nth, Kistensamy was [illegible] as a priest in a Hindu [illegible] his native city of D[illegible] presence of an [illegible] Indian audience [illegible] future make up [illegible] Kistensamy's Hindu [illegible] ing started when [illegible] four and orphaned [illegible] ken in by a Tamilian [illegible] foster mother, a devo[illegible] got the lad interested [illegible] scriptures. At 18, he [illegible] to join the merchant [illegible] his religious ties [illegible] powerful and he re[illegible] continue his studies a[illegible] his ambition—to [illegible] Hindu priest. Having [illegible] that goal he now has [illegible] one more. To visit Ind[illegible] more about Hindu[illegible] initiated as a priest [illegible] country. And if in Ind[illegible] amy has another [illegible] ind—visiting Tami[illegible] native ground of [illegible] ents. And for him [illegible] ke going back to [illegible]

Kistensamy: ambition achieved

SIGN POST

■ **pointed:** D[illegible] Red[illegible] he Deputy re[illegible] prese[illegible] ive for As[illegible] Pacific, the United[illegible] Food Agriculture[illegible] sation [illegible]

■ **Clo** The *Eco[illegible] nomist*, [illegible] wear [illegible] which wa[illegible] hed [illegible] Delhi.

■ **Nom[illegible]** Nurul Hasan, [illegible] of education as p[illegible] National Institute [illegible] nal Planning [illegible] tion.

■ **Died:** S K [illegible] cipient of the [illegible] award and a well-[illegible] at Calicut, follo[illegible] attack.

■ **Died:** Tri[illegible] Singh, 78, form[illegible] West Bengal and [illegible] dom fighter, [illegible] cardiac arrest [illegible]

■ **Died:** Di[illegible] nowned statis[illegible] in Tokyo, who[illegible] relations, at th[illegible]

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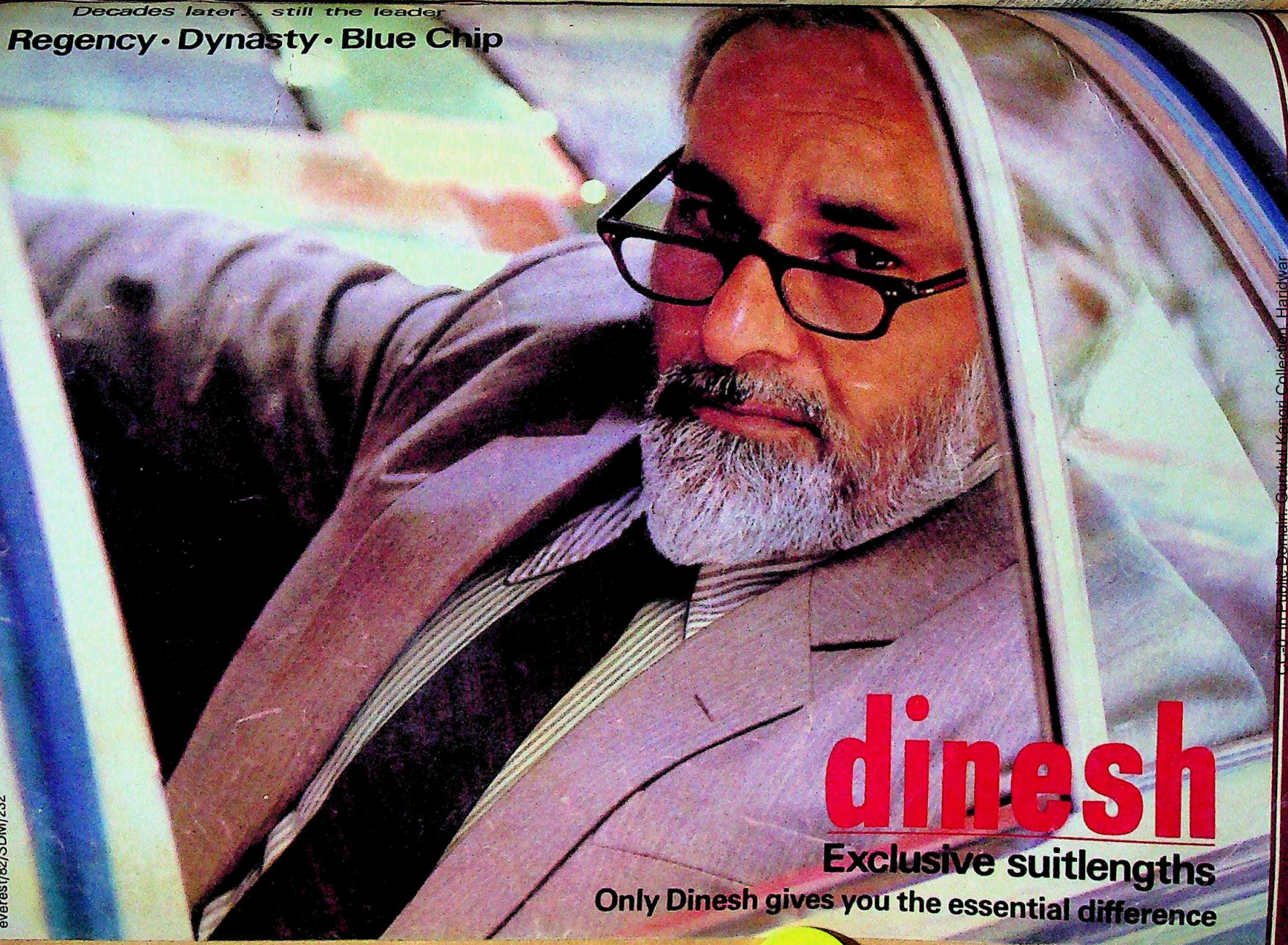

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FROM THE EDITOR

"NOTHING in his life became him like the leaving it." That famous quote from Shakespeare's Macbeth *may be rather premature when applied to the ailing Lion of Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah, but it certainly would be fitting if viewed in the context of the succession drama that enveloped the idyllic state last fortnight. As dynastic rulers go, the Abdullah stranglehold on Kashmir occupies a unique and chequered niche in Indian history. No other state leader has ruled so long and so absolutely and when he finally draped the mantle on his balding son, Farooq Abdullah in an emotion-charged ceremony in Srinagar, it marked the end of an era and the start of another.*

Kashmir's strategic position, coupled with the 'special status' it enjoys, make events like the succession one of national significance. The fact is that the Sheikh's abdication of political power in favour of an entity who is largely unknown outside Kashmir is particularly important for the Central Government. The Sheikh has ruled the state with a rod of iron and effectively blocked Central interference or outside political pressures, particularly from the ruling Congress (I). Now much will depend on how Farooq evolves as a political leader.

With that broader perspective in view, INDIA TODAY *opted to put Kashmir on the cover in this issue for the second time. The first was in 1977, when the Lion of Kashmir was roaring the loudest with the introduction of his infamous Public Safety Ordinance, then widely described as a mini-*MISA. *The focus this time is naturally on Farooq, the debutant leader of Kashmir and the enormous responsibility that now rests on his shoulders. Managing Editor* SUMAN DUBEY *spent five days in Srinagar talking to a cross-section of political and popular opinion to gauge the mood of the state and trace the events that led to Farooq's elevation.*

BUT WHILE one state leader was being anointed, another was on the verge of collapse. In Bihar, Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra's facade of a bumbling incompetent was rudely swept aside to expose the ugly face of his government with the recent draconian Bihar Press Bill that has now snowballed into a national controversy. To profile the man and his methods, Correspondent SUNIL SETHI *joined Patna Correspondent* FARZAND AHMED *in Patna to spend time with the chief minister and to assess the gathering protest movement against the bill.*

Further south, Bangalore Correspondent RAJ CHENGAPPA *was making another assessment of an acute psychological problem in Kerala that has grown out of the so-called Gulf boom phenomenon. Enforced and protracted separation of wives from their husbands working in the Gulf and the sudden change of their life-styles in Kerala has resulted in the birth of unforeseen problems that could have a widespread effect in the state.*

On the corporate front, the tobacco giant ITC was on the threshold of a major change with its high-profile Chairman Ajit Haksar, the czar of the company, chairing his last annual general meeting last fortnight before his final bow in January, 1983. To take a look at the probable fall-out of Haksar's departure and the kind of permanent stamp he has put on the company's face, Business Editor T.N. NINAN *flew down to Calcutta to interview Haksar and other senior ITC officials for his story on the company.*

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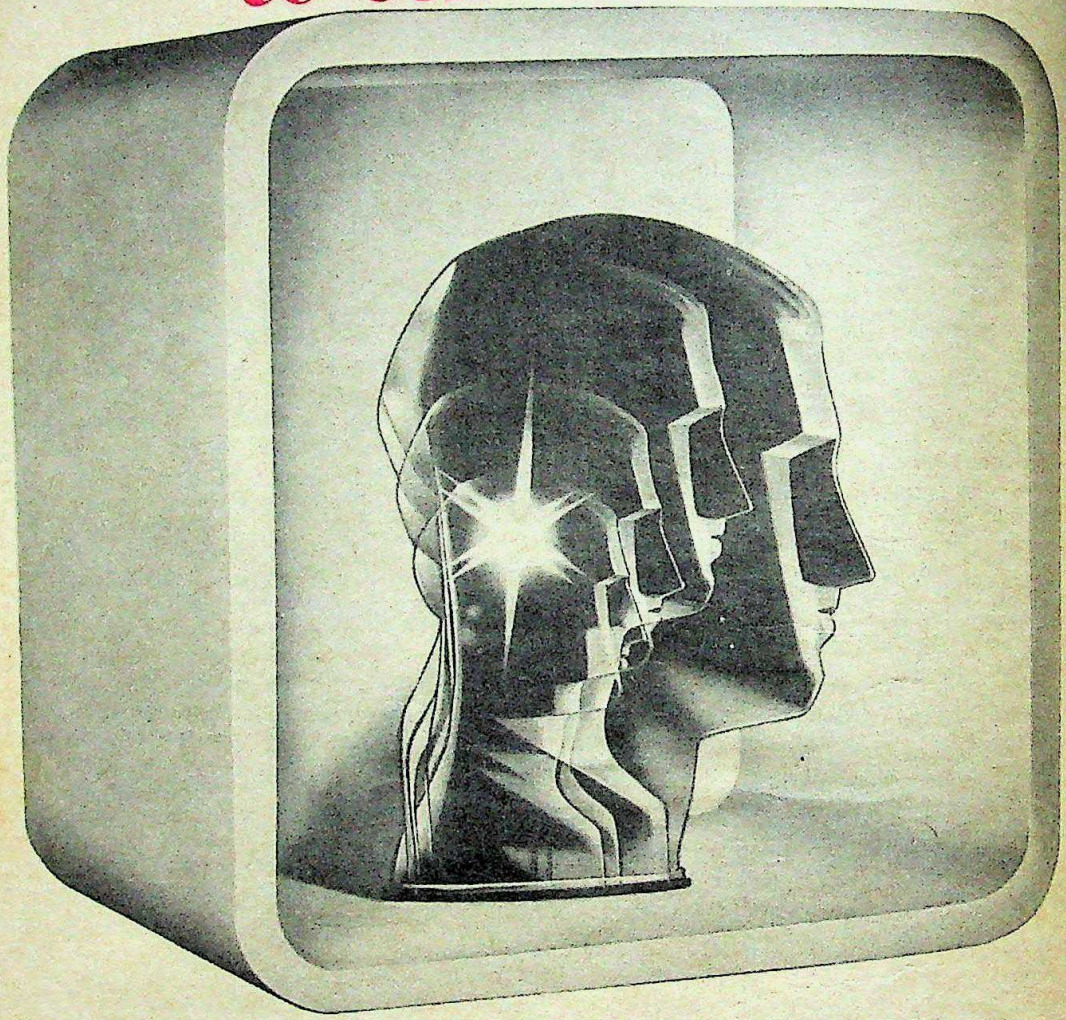

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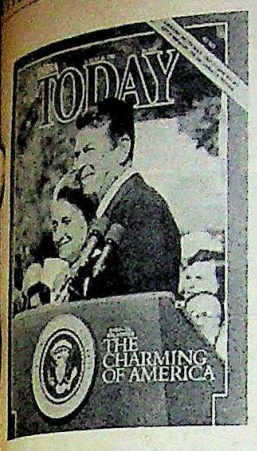

LES ALL THE WAY

The cover story, "Breaking The Ice" ust 31) covered Mrs Gandhi's success- ur of the US magnificently. In the past ve wasted time and energy by being ynastic to each other. It is unnatural for orld's largest and the world's greatest cracies to be at cross purposes. Even SSR should realise that the coming er of our two countries is only logical.
ore
Sunil Padiyar

Mrs Gandhi seems to have gone a long breaking the ice. But the true impact "voyage of discovery" will come only after her visit to the USSR.
R.K. Gulati

R BACKLASH

Mishra's Fig Leaf" (August 31) sho- what contempt the Government the press. What I can't understand is e press published Jagannath Mishra's ent about the Bill, albeit in an advert- t! Can't they resist the temptation to some easy money.
Delhi
V. Sagar

the article Arun Shourie says: "You en spoilt by these Bihar journalists k your permission to write." Being a urnalist myself let me assure Shourie o write what we consider to be in terests of the public and the nation are not in the habit of seeking permission. He goes on to write anath Mishra had "managed" the ccessfully but they have "fallen out over the past year". Does Shourie believe that the press had so far ed its rights to the Government ating now because of the "falling Shourie owes an explanation to the Bihar.
Ved Prakash Agarwal

ink the time has come to discuss stitutes the "irresponsible press" that the Government, in Bihar and elsewhere, goes on about. What exactly is meant by irresponsibility? How many dailies and periodicals fall into this category? What impact does this group have? I think the answers would prove very enlightening.
Ranchi *Pravin B. Sharan*

■ With people like Arun Shourie on the warpath how long can the Mishras, the Antulays and the Gundu Raos hide behind their propaganda of "yellow journalism" and "scurrilous reporting". The Magsaysay Award was given to a worthy candidate.
Patna *Shishir Kumar Jha*

■ As soon as I got this copy of INDIA TODAY it occurred to me that it will meet the fate of all magazines that write uncomplimentary things about the present Government. The last time, when this magazine carried a piece on Ranchi's mental hospital, copies sold for as much as Rs 15.
Patna *Om Prakash*

HEARTFELT SYMPATHY

The report on Amitabh Bachchan ("A Stricken Star", August 31) gave all the details that the dailies have missed out on. I did not realise the extent of the damage that Bachchan's system has undergone. But it says something for the man that so many people in the country wait for the daily health bulletins and are praying for him.
Bombay *Uma Shah*

CELLULOID SUCCESS

It is refreshing to see film stars on the cover of the magazine ("Filmdom's First Family," August 15) instead of the usual politicians. I hope this means there is a depoliticisation in the offing.
Bombay *P.J. Jacob*

■ On the eve of the release of *Prem Rog* every organ of the media seems to have fallen prey to Raj Kapoor's massive publicity blitz. Even a serious newsmagazine like this one. has succumbed to the blandishments of the "great showman".
Bombay *Rajasekar*

■ Even a person like me, who has followed Raj Kapoor's career closely, found fresh information. Raj Kapoor is a real gift to the film industry.
Madras *V.N. Narayanswamy*

■ The Kapoor contribution to the industry is not three generations old, but four. Prithviraj Kapoor's father, Lal Bishambharlal, used to manage the shows in which his son acted. And I remember him in the judge's role in Raj Kapoor's *Awara*, when he was very impressive. I also remember Prithviraj spreading his shawl outside his theatre after performances to collect money for the freedom movement.
Bombay *Jayantkumar M. Kothary*

■ The credit for the Kapoor success story goes to Prithviraj. He is the one who broke new ground and nurtured a fledgling industry. His legacy is a hard one to live up to but let us hope that his successors are worthy of it.
Gauhati *A. Borthakur*

■ The Kapoors who have dedicated themselves to the movie have started a new trend. Today all the older film stars are introducing their sons into the movies. The Kapoors have proved to them that this industry can sustain them over generations.
Bombay *Manish Vyas*

■ The Kapoor success story is a saga of nepotism. All they do is promote dubious home-grown talent. But I suppose putting the Kapoors on the cover is a highly profitable venture.
Calcutta *Chiranjit Banerjee*

■ The struggles, victories and defeats of the Kapoor family is a dazzling example of what it means to be a film family. But it is heartening to know that despite all the competition the family still sticks together.
Sanjay Raina
Rajiv Pazi
Srinagar *Anju Raina*

PRESIDENTIAL SCRIPT

In the article "Pomp And Presidency" (August 15) it has been mentioned that the President delivered the inaugural address in Hindi written in the Gurmukhi script. The script was Devanagari.
K. Suryanarayana,
President's Secretariat,
New Delhi Rashtrapati Bhavan

■ The article lacked any optimism and smacks of snide condescension.
New Delhi *L.M. Bhatia*

HEARTS AND MINDS

The photo-feature "Age And Innocence" (August 15) was at once depressing and elevating. The odd pair on the streets of Baroda, strains, subverts and finally enlarges our understanding of what human love is.
Chandigarh *Mohan Maharishi*

■ No matter what high-minded motives prompted you to publish this feature, the fact remains that in the ultimate analysis it is an act of cruelty. You have made this poor,

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defenceless couple the cynosure of public interest. For the first time, an INDIA TODAY photo-feature is in bad taste.
Delhi *Rajiv Handa*

■ It is amazing that Hira is able to retain a zest for life after her terrible experiences. I am sure that she can be cured with proper attention and this should be done by the authorities in Baroda. It is their moral duty.
Jabalpur *Rajeev Sinha*

■ The photo-feature touched our minds and hearts. I have no words to express its powerful impact. And the text that went along with it was extremely sensitive.
Amritsar *Maninder Singh*

■ Every photograph speaks for itself. And this poignant story has been captured superbly in all its facets. Their love should be an example to all of us.
Bokaro *Suresh Gaikwad*

■ The feature proved that underneath all the despair and degradation there is always something worth salvaging. In a world where most people operate like little islands, in-

RAGHU RAI

Hira and Nazeer: beacons of hope

different to the needs of others, Hira and Nazeer are like beacons of hope.
New Delhi *Rooma Mehra*

QUESTIONABLE LOYALTIES

■ The article "Of Political Bondage" (August 15) was informative and documented all the defects of the Intelligence Bureau. It is a fact that the Bureau today is controlled by a handful of VIPs loyal to the ruling family. And they are involved in everything, from bugging to brainwashing.
Patiala *Joginder Singh*

■ The fact that no less than 400 people of the Intelligence Bureau are involved in monitoring the activities of just two individuals—Maneka Gandhi and Akbar Ahmed—shows how absurdly frightened the prime minister is of these political nonentities. The cost of this monitoring is high and absolutely unjustified.
Agra *S.C. Mathur*

SCIENCE MISUSED

■ "A Needling Controversy" (August 15) showed how modern science can be misused by a dogmatic society like ours. Once it is realised that one can get rid of female foetuses who will only grow up to be liabilities there will be no limit to inhumanity. And as usual the law is ineffectual.
Rai *Lalit Kishore*

■ This is a needless controversy. If abortion is justified on economic and health grounds there is nothing wrong if female foetuses are killed. A decline in the female population by any means is to be welcomed. Only then will the status of women rise.
Bangalore *K. Sreedharan*

■ The term embryo has been used wrongly. The word embryo is used up to the eighth week of pregnancy and subsequently the term used is foetus.
Delhi *Piyush Gupta*

■ How far should one interfere with nature's processes? There are families where children of only one sex are born and who long to have a child of the opposite sex. For them, the sex discrimination test would indeed be a boon.
Solan *Kumar Raj*

LIVING MEDIA

The birth of so many more dailies and journals is good news ("A Change Of Diet", August 15). This is especially so as all over the world papers are closing down.
Jetpur *J.S. Dave*

■ Every time a new journal comes out, the media breaks new ground. Each one of them has something new to offer with which they can tempt readers from the established papers. It's good to know that the media in India is still evolving.
Pune *Rahul Chandravarkar*

OVERLOOKED

The article "The Growth Kings" (July 31) was an excellent piece of industrial journalism. But we in Kashmir were disappointed to find that there was no mention of Vittal Mallya's pharmaceutical factory, Optrex, in Srinagar.
Srinagar *A.K. Bhat*

HOME TRUTHS

"England's Revenge" (July 31) was an education and a treat. The observations will leave no discerning cricket lover in doubt of the fact that the Selection Board should revamp the team and choose another captain. Bishen Singh Bedi is very right when he says that commercial ventures have robbed the cricketers of their interest in the game. G.R. Vishwanath is the obvious person to lead the team—he is the only one who provides sense, substance and stability to the team. Sunil Gavaskar must remain in the team as the opening bat, but his captaincy days are over.
Udhampur *Subhash Ch...*

■ The article is a much-needed dose of truth for the selectors. Our defeat in England was a selection debacle. The boosting of players from Bombay at the cost of players from the rest of the country, especially D..., proved too heavy a price.
Hyderabad *G.S.V.S...*

RIGHT CALIBRE

It was heartening to read in "The Lessons of Luthar" (July 15) of the way P.C. Luthar has wrought at the ... pecially here where good news about Indian public sector is rare. I know it requires tact, management skills and cou... to produce the outstanding results that has. I can also imagine that it takes a great deal of sacrifice to hold on to his post in an hostile environment. The lesson of L... is that a public sector enterprise is as good the man on the top.
Baghdad *P.P. Dhar...*

OIL THEFTS

In the report "Oily Crooks" (the statement: "It is not our job to pe... are concerned with oil exploration" been wrongly attributed to R.M. K... project manager at Mehsana. Even face of it, it sounds rather odd th... manager of the project should make an irresponsible statement. Mr Kochar, contrary, informed the correspondent efforts being made by the ONGC in... police help to stop the incidence of oil-... O.P. ... Public Relations ...
Baroda

■ *Our correspondent in Ahmedabad firms that Mr Kochar did, in fact, s... words we have quoted. During the ... with our correspondent, Mr Kochar ... plain that it was not the job of the ... guard the wells or stop thefts; that ... work of the police. His job, he said, ... explore for oil. We also gathered ... ONGC does not always inform the p... the thefts take place. Our correspon... nds by his story.*

LINGUAL DEMAND

INDIA TODAY is perhaps the ... gazine in the country and I feel ... should now bring out a Hindi edi... response to this would be tremen...
Delhi *S.C. ...*

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West Bengal: Chatterjee's Folly
Tripura: Quiet Exit
Andhra Pradesh: Political Pot-boiler
Haryana: 'Spoil' Split
Madhya Pradesh: Turning Off The Tap
Karnataka: The Merger Muddle
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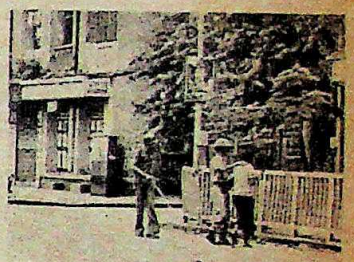
Eric Macay: Close Encounters
Jagganer: A Dying Tradition
Cinema
Sriram Kanta: Stealing the Scenes
Books
Misplaced Optimism.
Eye-catchers

PHOTOGRAPH BY BHAWAN SINGH

IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT

COVER STORY: With politics becoming increasingly a family business, the succession issue in the Kashmir valley last fortnight wore an air of inevitability. But when the ailing Sheikh Abdullah officially handed over the baton to his son Farooq, it was not lacking in drama and nor was it all that smooth a passage. Instead, it was preceded by unseemly palace intrigue, family squabbles and a lurking foreboding for the future. **Page 46**

CURRENT EVENTS: Last fortnight's ugly riots involving the Bombay police petered out fairly quickly but the cause and the effect still simmered. Elsewhere in the country, brushfires broke out as rankling discontent found expression within the police force in other states. Though the Government was quick to act in sacking malcontents it was obvious that the Bombay violence was a ticking time bomb. **Page 17**



LIVING: The coming of the Gulf boom which has given an estimated 2.07 lakh workers jobs has also left behind its attendant evil. Kerala, which incidentally exports the maximum amount of manpower to the Gulf, records the highest number of mental cases in the country. Ironically the mental illnesses have been found especially acute in the "gulf pockets" of the state. A report. **Page 58**

BEHAVIOUR: For the estimated 50,000 eunuchs in India, fear is the key to survival. Apart from their sexual deformity and crude behaviour, little is known about their existence. Recently, a 15-year-old boy, Mohammad Hanif Vora, who was forcibly inducted into the life of eunuchry but managed to escape after four terror-filled months, unravelled the gruesome details of the rituals of the eunuchs. **Page 84**

ECONOMY & INDUSTRY: When Ajit Haksar, the urbane, distinguished-looking chairman of the tobacco giant ITC, finally steps down at the end of the year, he will leave behind a corporate record that will be difficult to match. Ever since he took over in 1968, Haksar has put an indelible personal stamp on the company. What was the Haksar factor? **Page 96**

PROFILE: In one dramatic move, Bihar Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra stripped aside the facade of a bumbling benevolent and exposed the cancerous face beneath. His infamous Bihar Press Bill, introduced last month, has snowballed into a major national controversy that threatens to eject him from his seat. A profile on the man and how he operates. **Page 118**

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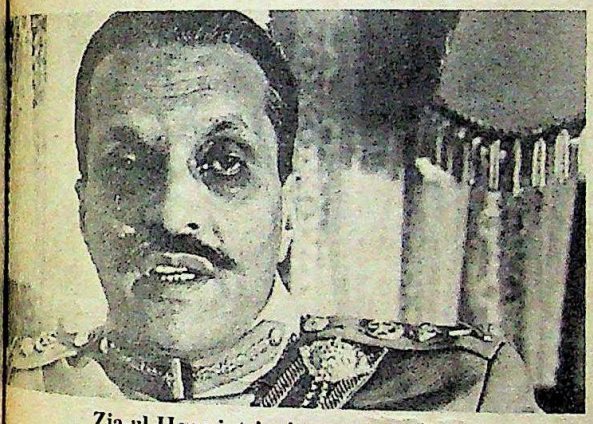
SUMMIT IN DELHI

AFTER much initial reluctance, New Delhi is presently busy preparing to host the next non-aligned summit during March 2–5 next year. Invitations have already been sent to heads of all the 93 members of the non-aligned community and as many as 75 of them are expected to attend the summit. Nearly 3,000 delegates are to descend on the capital for the occasion. Senior members of the member countries will converge in Delhi for a meeting of the coordination bureau on February 25 and 26. This will be followed by a three-day meeting of foreign ministers. Heads of state and government will arrive on March 1 for the four-day summit beginning the next day. The summit was originally scheduled to be held in Baghdad but the venue was changed because of the Iran-Iraq war which led to intense pressure by Iran and other Arab countries for a change of host. Cuba made a bid to stage the summit but member countries almost unanimously plugged for New Delhi.

IN DACCA

ENERAL Zia-ul-Haq will pay an official visit to Bangla-esh early next year—the first such visit by a Pakistani president since the bloody civil war in 1971. The General's ..., revealed in an interview to a Dacca journalist last fortnight



Zia-ul-Haq: intriguing move

...as something of a surprise. The top brass of the Pakistani ... has never quite forgotten its humiliating defeat 11 years ago. ...e last year a special meeting of the Organisation of Islamic ...ces to honour the assassinated Bangladeshi president Ziaur ...man couldn't be held in Dacca because of opposition from the ...ladeshi president. General Zia did not want to send delegates as ...ould have had to place wreaths at Dacca's national monument ...e martyrs who were killed by the Pakistani Army during the ...tion war. Zia calls his forthcoming Dacca visit "something ..." and it remains to be seen just what is so special about it.

...L ARMS FIRE

...TWEEN India and Bangladesh, there are no permanent ...iends or enemies, only interests. India has consistently ...protested at the 'sanctuary' provided by Bangladesh to the ...National Front and Tripura guerrillas in the Chittagong hill ...s. But well-informed sources proudly say that India is providing ...ddhist Chakma tribals, who are facing persecution at the ...s of the paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles, with sophisticated ...rms. Not only that. The remnants of the Mukti Bahini, led ...f Sheikh Mujibur Rehman loyalist 'Tiger' Siddiqui, are said ...e been "camping" on the Indian side of the Brahmaputra, in ...r areas, where the Assam agitators allege the majority of ...gal immigrants from Bangladesh are settled. Siddiqui has ...edly been staging occasional lightning raids across the river.

FAR-SIGHTED GAMBIT

THE RED Adair team that helped fight the Bombay High blowout of an oil rig, Sagar Vikas, ran up an astronomical bill for his professional fees. The Indian Government, however, did not have to pay a single paisa. The entire tab for the team's charges was picked up by Occidental Petroleum, the giant oil company that comprised one of the famous Seven Sisters. Top officials of Occidental met Mrs Gandhi during her US visit and offered to underwrite the Adair expenses, an offer that was promptly accepted. There was, however, nothing unusual in the offer. Petroleum circles say that it is a fairly normal occurrence since the companies recoup their generosity in terms of future contracts and oil drilling concessions. Occidental is bidding for quite a few of the new drilling concessions that the Indian Government will shortly be deciding on for the next phase of ONGC's programme.

INTERNECINE STRIFE

FOR all its increasing ferocity, the underground National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) led by Thuingaleng Muivah is facing considerable internal problems. More and more young Nagas are flocking to the NSCN's headquarters in Burma, but Muivah, who is a Thangkhul Naga, has alienated many of the other important tribes. The Angamis, who led A.Z. Phizo's federal government set-up before Muivah broke away in early 1980, have borne the brunt of his rage. The Semas, another important tribe, have also suffered—the five NSCN guerrillas who surrendered to the Army last month were all Semas. Major-General Povezo Chakhesang and three of his fellow Chakhesang officers are awaiting trial by the NSCN's Military Council. Worse still, NSCN Vice-President S.S. Khaplang has been captured by Burmese Army troops. All these developments have demoralised the NSCN to some extent. But with hundreds of new recruits joining up, Muivah seems to retain the upper hand.

SIKORSKY VS SEA KINGS

INDIA's impending purchase of anti-submarine helicopters seems to have run into some unexpected interference. The Navy was keen on the British-made Sea Kings which distinguished themselves during the Falkland war earlier this year. Now, a new entrant has popped up on the horizon—the American anti-submarine Sikorsky S-61D helicopter. Sikorsky had originally been rejected by the defence ministry but the version that is now being reconsidered is the model being manufactured under licence by the Italian helicopter firm, Agusta. Till recently, the agreement was that Agusta would not sell the aircraft outside Italy but they have now been permitted to do so, hence the rethinking.

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• ...The course is divided in easy sixty-day lessons which can teach the reader how to speak and write good English without the help of any teacher. **Nagpur Times, Nagpur**

• ...Fluency and correct pronunciation of English is as essential as writing and this is all what this book provides in a systematic way. **Gujarat Mitra, Surat**

• ...The publication, produced neatly and with pleasant look, should be of immense help to the housewives and others who are desirous of learning the English language in a short time without seeking help from others. **Deccan Chronicle, Hyderabad**

• ...Written in a conversational style, the book is fully capable of teaching spoken English... The intricacies of English grammar are easy to understand when you read this book. **Navbharat Times, New Delhi**

• ...The special quality of this book is the select list of words of daily use given with their meanings... The attempt to simplify the fundamentals of language and grammar at the end of each chapter is indeed laudable. **Jugantar, Calcutta**

• ...This book is very useful in convent schools too, as the text-matter for mastering English is given in an excellent manner. **Dinamani, Madras**

• ...The English text is given with its Tamil translation and transliteration to enable students to acquire the ability of properly pronouncing English words and sentences. **Sunday Standard, Madras**

• ...The necessity of a book that could impart good knowledge of spoken English was long felt. Rapidex English Speaking Course comes out with flying colours in this respect. **Bombay Samachar, Bombay**

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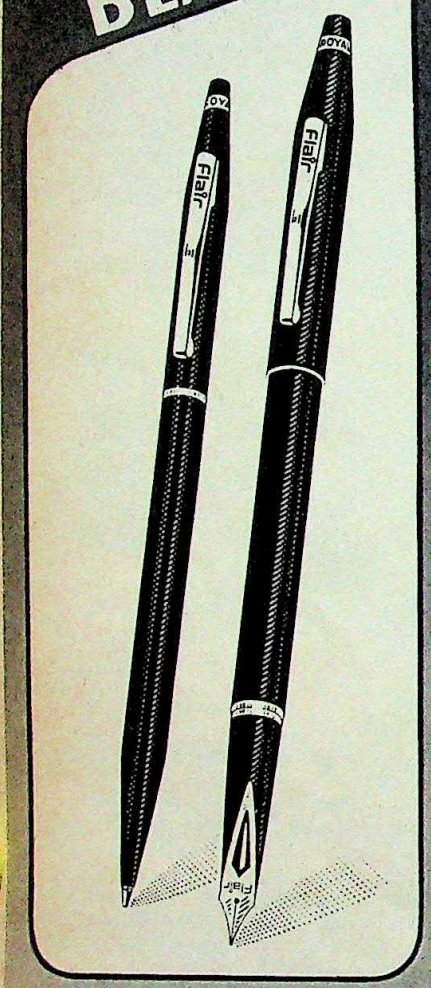

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» You have the temerity to say this to Indira Gandhi?
—Mrs Gandhi replying to a charge in Parliament she had compromised India's self

» Who cares for your confidence?
—Y.B. Chavan on the Opposition's no-confidence motion in the Lok

» I warn you that people are praising you too much. They are making a Hitler out you. *—H.N. Bahuguna to Mrs Gandhi during the debate on the no-confidence m*

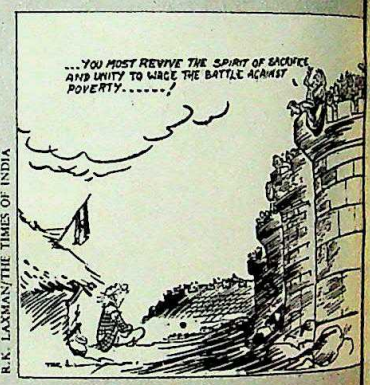
» Having once had the bitter experience of crawling when asked to bend, let press now stand upright when it has been asked to bow.
—Editorial comment in The Daily *on the Bihar pres*

» The lessons on press censorship during the Emergency and the heavy cost Mrs Indira Gandhi and her government had to pay on that count have been forgo
—Maneka G

» We bought that junk (*Surya*) from her (Maneka Gandhi)... Only now I w what we can do with this junk—we can't even run it.
—Ram Jethmalani in Gentle

» He (a police officer) however conceded that another reason why the star (Amitabh Bachchan) received special attention was because he was a "Congress(I) leader". —Sunday

» When Prime Minister Indira Gandhi flew down to his (Bachchan's) sick-bed soon after her tiring journey across the seas, she did not come to see the son of a friend. She came to pay her tributes to the other darling of Indian youth.
—Ayub Syed in Current



» If one bride is burnt for a black and white TV, how many brides for conversi colour?
—Letter in The Times of I

» Arun Shourie is a menace to air-conditioned editorial cabins because kind of journalism requires you to get out in the heat.
—Vinod Mehta in The Sunday Ob

» A sad and frightening situation prevails in the country—a powerless Presiden amoral prime minister, corrupt politicians and ministers, a fawning bureaucracy greedy upper class of consumerists being blandly serviced by gangsters and smug
—M.V. Kamath in

» First it was the British and now it is the politicians who are our white boys... We still refuse to admit that they are reflections of our own face.
—I.S. Johar in The Illustrated Weekly of I

» What single family in India can boast of such a galaxy of intellect among its as the Nehru family?... Why, we should conquer the world with these descendants who I am sure will go on adding fresh lustre to the family name as go by.
—Motilal Nehru in a letter to his brother B.N. Nehru in 1912 reproduced in Hindustan

» I should write and compliment him (Arun Shourie) for having brought bo public eye what I was doing for the poor... Instead of filing for defamation, I file for "famation"—each piece adds to my stature.
—A.R. Antulay in C

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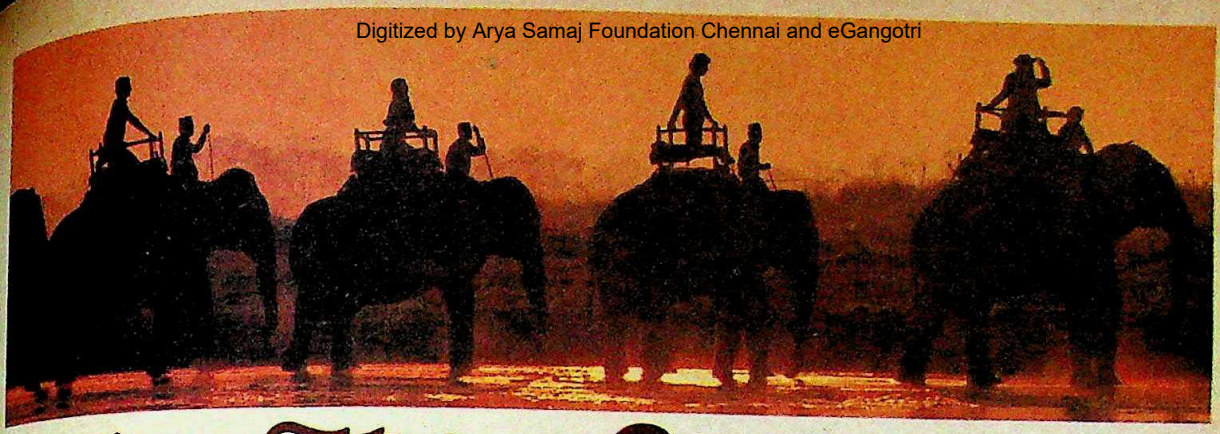

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...SUAL AFFAIR

...Most people take wed-...s seriously, that is, they ...k themselves up into a ...e of paranoia days before ...e august event, and do not ...d their hair down until after ...e newlyweds have gone their ...wer-strewn way. But a few ...s disdain such slavish ...s.

...In Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh, ...fortnight, the house of ...bride was scintillating: festoons of lights, coloured streamers, music and a string of relatives, friends and hangers-on warbling away to glory. However, the festivities grew a little less festive when the bridegroom didn't turn up in the evening. Even as the moon shone and the clock struck twelve, young Lochinvar failed to arrive. In fact, things were beginning to look a little like those Hindi film scenes where papas and mamas and brothers and sisters in resplendent hair-dos curse fate and beat breasts.

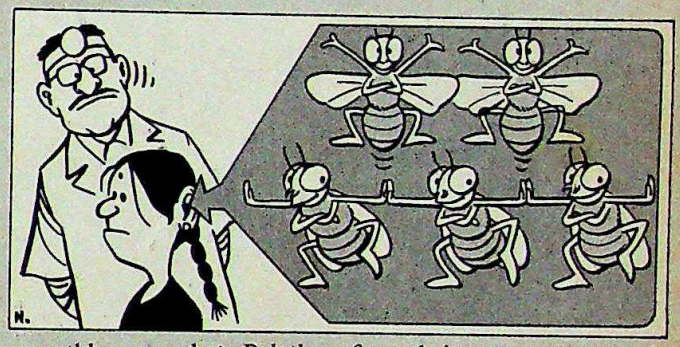
Thankfully, someone had a bright idea: he revved up his motorcycle, took along somebody as shotgun, and dashed to the bridegroom's village—where they found the whole family sound asleep, having forgotten the date of the wedding. The solution was obvious: the night reverberated to the sound of a mad motorcycle as it brought Lochinvar, finally, to his peeved beloved.

...ARING THINGS

...When 10-year-old Pala-...amma was admitted to the ...vernment Stanley Medical ...lege Hospital in Madras ...month, doctors suspected ...they knew what was ...g on—going on inside her ...to be precise. For some ...e, Palathamma's right ear ...been throbbing uncom-...ably, and it sounded as if ...hole horde of insects were ...g a circus in the cavity. ...that, it turned out, was ...ctly what it was.

After administering a dose of ether to her ear, the doctors got to work with a syringe and, one by one, very, very carefully, removed 80 flies from the ear. It appears that flies are attracted to the wax in Palathamma's ear, and find it a nice place to start a family. Over the months, the family grows into a community, and the community into a city, by which time the ear literally buzzes with activity.

The reason why doctors carried out their operation so smoothly was that Palathamma had come to them two years ago with the same problem. That time, about 200 flies were dragged drugged from their warm sanctuary. It seems that the slum clearance operation then has discouraged the squatters to an extent.

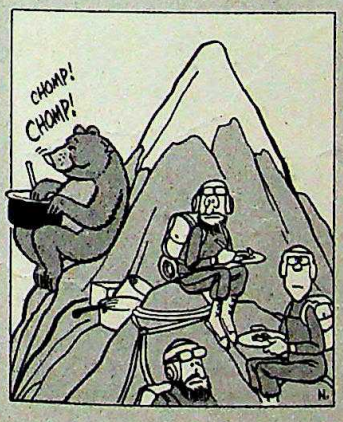


...CIAL ANIMAL

...It is well known that ...ntaineers have to contend ...h a lot of things, mostly ...s of Nature like avalan-...s, snowstorms, freezing ...peratures and the like. To ...e list of delicacies the people ...e for some unfathomable ...son, walk up the Ladakh ...alayas have added a ...—or Bhaloo.

...He is not a very bad or a very unsociable bear. In fact, he errs on the side of sociability, especially when his hosts lay out tables groaning with food. Recently, a West German expedition felt the brunt of the bear's appetite when it sauntered in and smashed about 200 eggs. The members of the expedition were expeditioning when the friendly animal visited.

The bear, however, appears to be quite timid: he runs away when plates are rattled in his face, hides behind a rock, and when the rattling stops, and everybody has gone away, returns for more food. The authorities are trying to trap Bhaloo and take him away so that no starving West Germans wander around in circles until they drop. Meanwhile, a joke has it that Bhaloo is part of the Government's entertainment programme for tourists.



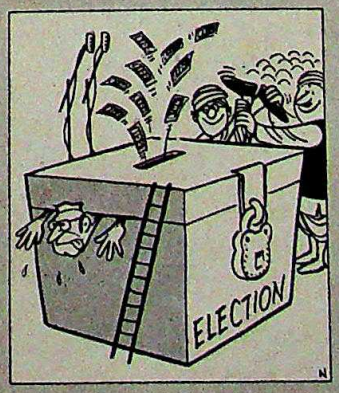
...TE FEST

...Fighting elections in ...is an expensive business. ...Nagaland takes the ...—big slices of it. The Ao ...in the state, popularly ...n as the Naga marwaris, ...realised that there is gold ...them thar elections.

...The process of milking ...poor candidate dry begins ...the identity cards have to be made out. He has to hire a fleet of buses and trucks to carry his probable voters to the place where the cards are made out, and bring them back. At the end of this great event, he has to give them a feast—one of the delightful customs of the Nagas is that they feast at the drop of a hat.

This nerve-racking and expensive exercise over, come election day, the candidate has to carry his voters to the booths in another fleet of buses and trucks. After which, the Nagas sit down in a circle waiting for another feast—cooked in lip-licking ways.

When the candidate wins, he must—you guessed it—empty his by now war-worn pockets for another feast. Perhaps nowhere do people wait for elections with such gusto as in Nagaland.



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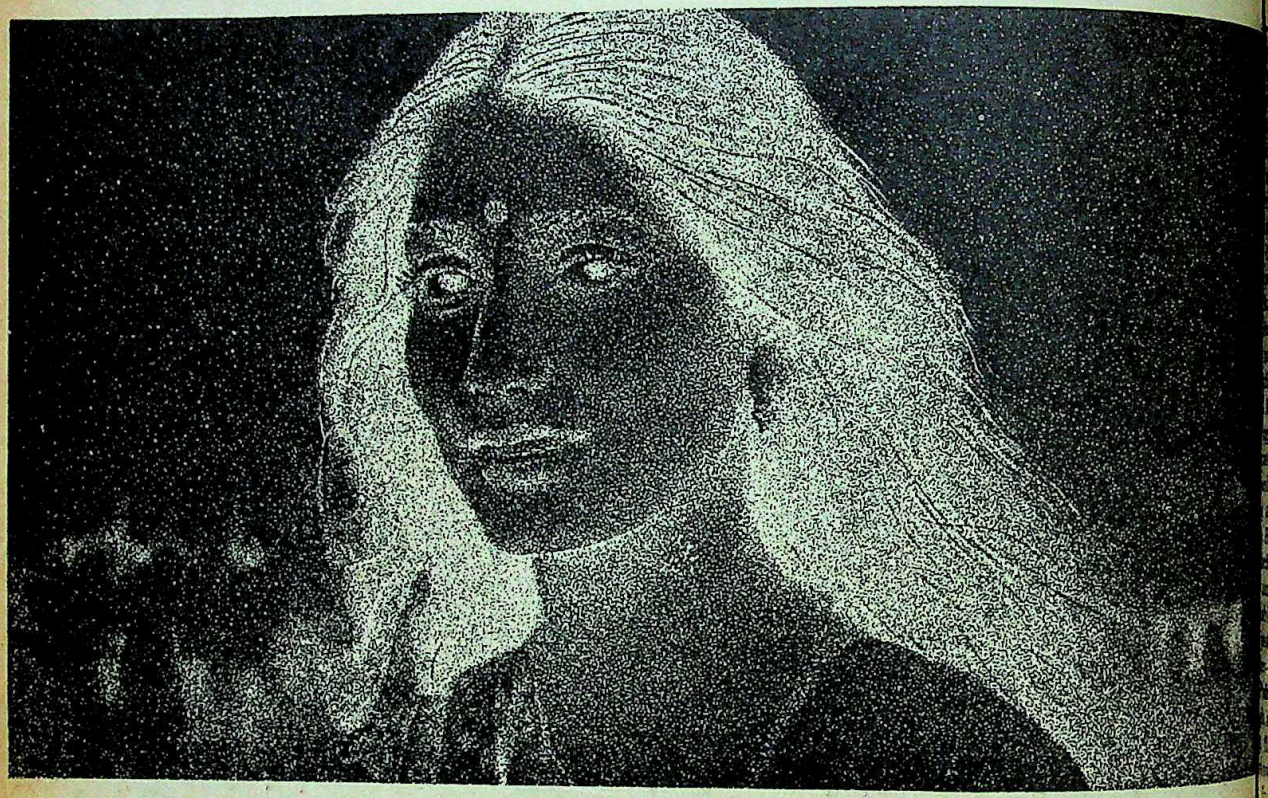
Delhi, January 1980.

As a lively young working girl begins her day, a wayward truck ends her life. If only...



If only prevention had been a priority.

Two years ago, a pretty 24-year old working girl in Delhi died when the autorickshaw in which she was travelling was hit from behind by a truck. The driver of the auto was hospitalised with multiple fractures and the truck driver absconded.

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ighting The Fuse

FLASHED at Bombay like a thunder-storm, submerging the city in a two-day-long tide of arson, shoot-outs and street violence. Then, the headwind of state-wide discontent, the policemen's shocked Haryana, forcing the state Government to order a pre-emptive wave of arrests. Before the fortnight was out, the fizz in the bottle was threatening to burst open in New Delhi itself, the nation's capital, bringing grim forebodings of a mutiny in the ranks of 1 million constables.

It started as a merely churlish act on Independence Day when some members of Bombay's 23,000-strong constabulary decided to wear black badges on their sleeves in protest of their long-standing grievances regarding pay, housing and career opportunities. Provoked by this gesture, encouraged on by patently exaggerated reports of a raid on police armouries, the fledgling administration of Babasaheb Bhosale, the Maharashtra chief minister, called out the police and cracked down on the policemen with a ferocity which was just needed to ignite the powder-keg.

Police Fury: It seemed as though all of Bombay would go up in flames. Cutting off the affluent south Bombay districts from the northern fronts, the mainland became a battlefield of violence from August 18. The final tally of 15 dead including seven children, 40 treated for serious injuries and over 200 for minor injuries, 25 buses of the Bombay Electric Supply and Transport (BEST), five trucks of the police and private vehicles gutted. But this does not portray its psychological impact on a city unaccustomed to such open outbursts of police fury.

What triggered the Bombay riots? The Bhosale administration had ordered on the previous night the suspension of the powerful Maharashtra Police Karmachari Sanghatana and the arrest of its top leaders. Angered by its militant president, Datta Ithape: dismissal of some of the 'ring leaders', and physical takeover of the headquarters by the Border Security Force (BSF). The crack-down was planned under a veil of secrecy, but its authors were too pigheaded to analyse either its morality or its after-effects.

While Bombay was engulfed in an orgy of violence, about 500 members of the Haryana Armed Police blocked the arterial Grand Trunk Road near their barracks at Madhuban, close to Chandigarh, and went berserk. Already disarmed, they threw stones at passing cars and assaulted officers, including the newly-appointed Inspector General of Police (IGP) M.S. Bawa. As a sequel, nearly 300 men were dismissed from service and BSF battalions were called out to replace the restive policemen.

In New Delhi, a mere 100 miles away, the mood of the 20,000 constables was fast changing from passive acceptance to strong militancy. Bhagwan Dass Shastri, a veteran leader of police movements and president of the All-India Non-gazetted Policemen's Federation, Delhi, issued a strongly-worded statement saying that the Delhi Police could begin an agitation at any time as the Government had been treating them as "bonded labour". Said a distraught Union Home Ministry official: "You can smell violence in the police lines of the capital. The constables here have never displayed so much sullenness. Something has certainly gone wrong."

Irate Mobs: The worst, of course, happened in Bombay. In the country's richest, and least politicised city, hordes of irate constables, swarming out of their gloomy chawls at Worli and Girgaum, readily found that a large number of the city's militant sansculotte had already joined them. They came from the ranks of the 1 million unemployed as well as the 2.25 lakh textile workers rendered jobless in the wake of the eight-month long strike in the industry.

It was a convergence of multiple interests. The constables ran amuck in a spontaneous display of indignation; the textile workers selectively attacked the houses of the leaders of the pro-establishment trade union, Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh (RMMS), such as Bhaurao Patil, Bhai Bhosale and Vasantrao Hoshing; the local rowdies joined the fray largely for plunder and booty, which they got in ample measure when the giant Century Bazar department store was broken into and ransacked.

It was a sight that Bombayites had not witnessed since the Samyukta Maharashtra agitation in the late '50s. With the usually bustling streets deserted because of a curfew, troops massed at all important crossings, and an occasional army truck meshing gear as it tore down the road, Bombay wore a completely unfamiliar look for three days. Said a senior company executive: "In my 18 years in Bombay I have never seen an uprising like this. On the way home the roads were covered with carpets of shattered glass. Charred wrecks of buses and trucks still smouldered, and the back-alleys were taken over by hoodlums."

A victim of Bombay riots: grim portents

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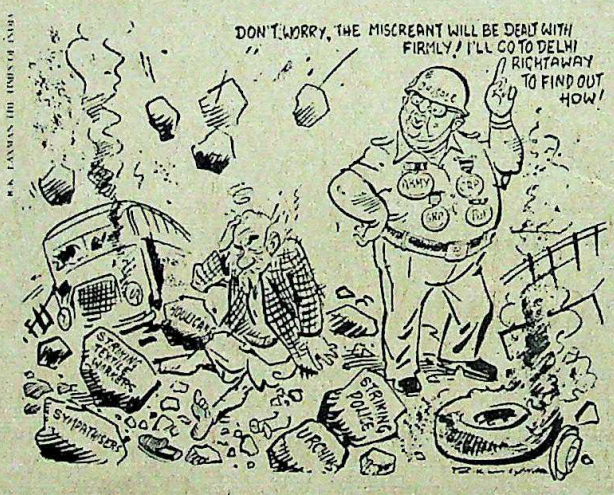
The eruption of violence in Bombay was the product of years of neglect shown to the constables by an administration which had suddenly woken up to the problem and in the process confused firmness with rigidity, if not ruthlessness. And Bhosale compounded the folly by stuffing power into the hands of K.P. Medhekar, IGP, who, as later events showed, enjoyed little confidence of his force, and Shrikant Jichkar, minister of state for home, who, at 28, was certainly not the epitome of administrative experience.

Disastrous Overkill: Both Medhekar and Jichkar had gone in for a disastrous overkill and were quite carried away with their own plan for a commando-style crackdown on the constabulary. Basing their decision on poor intelligence, they had locked away 12,000 men of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in the districts, where virtually no trouble had taken place while the city itself rocked with violence. At the end, the Home Department looked like an abode of muddle-headed amateurs deriving ideas from cheap paperback thrillers.

Still more reprehensible are the Maharashtra Government's acts of omission and commission in relation to the constabulary spanning many years. During the time of Abdul Rehman Antulay, the police force was politicised with a reckless abandon, patronage was distributed to the favoured factions in the MPKS, but no substantial effort was made to improve the lot of the men in uniform. As Bhosale took over, the administrative pendulum swung violently in the opposite direction and, in the name of "strong measures", the Government suddenly blocked all avenues of conciliation. The constables might have thrown discipline to the four winds, but that does not undermine the validity of the MPKS's 36-point demand. As Nihar Ranjan Laskar, Union minister of state for home cautiously conceded: "Some of the demands are born out of genuine grievances."

HOUSING is the worst problem the cops face in Bombay. The police force in Maharashtra has 6,515 officers and 91,550 men. However, the shortfall in officers' accommodation is 3,397 while 43,661 constables, or nearly 42 per cent of them, have no staff quarters. In Bombay city, nearly 10,000 constables are asked to find their own accommodation with the pittance of a 15 per cent house rent allowance, which, at the constable's starting wage of Rs 350, works out to a measly Rs 52.50. This is a cruel joke in a city like Bombay where the going rent for a 150 sq ft private chawl accommodation is Rs 25 a month and a minimum of Rs 15,000 as *pugari*. The chawls in which 40 per cent of the force lives are rented by the Government: the B.B.D. chawl in Worli was rented 60 years ago and the rent, paid by the Government, works out to Rs 1/6 per month for a 10 ft by 12 ft room.

The housing that is already provided is comparable only to a pigsty. It consists of 160 sq ft of squalid, under-ventilated room space at the B.B.D. chawl and 150 sq ft of dingy space at Goregandhi chawl in Girgaum which, after 20 years, has no electricity. Add to that the inhuman working hours—often 12 hours a day—and the constables' sudden fit of anger need not baffle anyone. At the end of a more-than-eight-hour shift he is entitled to only Rs 5 as refreshment allowance; while on duty, he is often humiliated by higher-ups;and he is by turns put on 'orderly duty which, in



effect, means serving superior officers.

The 36-point charter of the MPKS related to demands, the high points of which are:

- police constables should be promoted to head constables after 15 years;
- the scheme for providing subsidised foodgrains to the policemen, as already announced by the state Government, should be implemented straight away;
- all policemen should be provided with accommodation;
- the children of policemen should get free primary and secondary technical education;
- officers misusing their power on constables should be harshly dealt with; and
- 75 per cent of the vacancies in the cadre of sub-inspectors should be filled from the ranks of constables.

Though the charter of demands was drafted in the middle of August, the conflict between Mohite's MPKS and Medhekar had actually begun in July when the state police chief had denied the Sanghatana permission to hold a meeting of its state-level executive body. Medhekar had felt slighted by Mohite's lukewarm response to an invitation for [illegible] in the earlier regime, Antulay had made it a practice that the MPKS chief would talk [illegible] to the chief minister, bypassing the [illegible]

Subjective Reaction: For Mohite, it was a matter of honour to speak directly to the chief minister though, by an order of November 1, 1981, the control and administration of the police force was vested in the IGP's office, making him the adviser to the Government on all questions of police administration, police budget, general transfers and discipline of the police force. Mohite felt the insult personally and gave vent to his feelings when he described the police badge protest on Independence Day as "irresponsible, unlawful, perverse ... a disgrace to the national flag...a seditious act."

However, on August 15, Mohite decided to play it safe by ensuring that constables wore their black ribbons after the flag salutation and not before or during it. He had argued at his meeting that wearing a mere black ribbon hardly undermined patriotic feelings and that there was no "seditious" content in his movement. But the Government's mind was made up. In fact preparations for the crackdown had started days before the Independence Day protest.

This was clear from the testimony of Brigadier N.C. Mehra, commander of the Bombay sub-area who planned the army operation with four columns of troops and another four columns in reserve. Said Mehra: "The entire movement was planned at least a week before the expected day of the crackdown." The decision to "fix" the police had therefore been taken as early as August 11, that is four days before the swoop. As Madhu Dandavate, the Janata Party MP said: "The Bhosale administration is plainly over-reached. It is an expression of its own built-in insecurity."

Virulent Campaign: This is literally true. On the night of the crackdown, Bhosale himself was not in Bombay. He was in the capital, busy immunising himself against a virulent campaign by as many as 22 Maharashtra Congress(I) MP's for his role.

At the root of the trouble lies the attitude which Bhagwan Dass Shastri, sitting in the federation's office in New Delhi, identified as "politics, prejudice and parsimony". Shastri bitterly lamented that the Government for years treated the constabulary "like a sweeper is treated; that is, he serves a right but he is not fit to be touched."

The federation members claimed that there was a "pattern" in the dismissals in Haryana, where "[illegible] Jat constables" were being replaced

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MANEKA GANDHI

Party Games

POLITICAL commitments are just as thin as the paper on which they are made. But Maneka Gandhi, who turned 26 on August 26, has apparently not yet learnt the rules of the game, despite her excellent apprenticeship in mother-in-law Mrs Gandhi's house for six years. Last fortnight she paid a rather heavy price for her naivete.

True to her style, she held a press conference on August 25, calculated to grab headlines on her birthday. Addressing newsmen at her Rajendra Place office, and interspersing words with her familiar syrupy smile, she said she was about to launch a new party, Akhil Bharatiya Sanjay Vichar Manch. She named two Congress(I) MP's, Kalapnath Sonkar from Basti in Uttar Pradesh, and Ram Narayan Tripathi from Kanpur, who had already agreed to join her. However, one of them issued a statement contradicting the claim. Tripathi, a grey-haired former socialist, flew quickly to New Delhi, checked that his denial went on the news agency teleprinters within hours of Maneka's press conference, and returned to Kanpur, threatening that he would sue her for "forgery". Still, party insiders were hardly convinced by Tripathi's insistent claim that Maneka had used his name entirely without his consent.

Maneka's press conference: naive move

Turn-around: At her press conference, Maneka had circulated a letter, written in Hindi on Tripathi's own pad and signed by him, which stated that he had joined her "unconditionally" and "with full confidence in your leadership". Tripathi claimed that the signature and the letter-head itself was "either fabricated or stolen". He immediately wrote another letter to All India Congress Committee(I) General Secretary Vasantrao Patil, reaffirming his "full and abiding confidence" in the leadership of Mrs Gandhi.

A day before Maneka's press conference, Veer Bahadur Singh, the Uttar Pradesh minister for irrigation and transport, was tipped off by the party high command about Tripathi's imminent desertion and was assigned the job of preventing it. Singh had a three-hour session with Tripathi at his ministerial bungalow; finally Tripathi was prevailed upon. On Maneka's birthday, the morning dailies brought her the none too pleasant gift with the news of Tripathi's volte-face.

However, Maneka's aide J.N. Mishra told INDIA TODAY that on August 20, sitting at Temple Tea Stall, a dingy restaurant at Lucknow's Kaiserbagh, he had got three copies of the letter signed by Tripathi himself. He says for weeks before that Tripathi had been in touch with Maneka and "boiling with rage" against the Congress(I) leadership in Uttar Pradesh. "Let him go to court," Mishra challenged angrily.

Missing Politician: At the same time, Singh and his men began a search for Sonkar who, apprehending trouble, had quietly disappeared from the scene. Meanwhile the District Congress Committee(I) announced that Sonkar had been "kidnapped". He surfaced two days later saying that he was not kidnapped but had just been to a relative's house. A persistent Singh caught up with him too and was able to extract from him a statement saying that he had not left the Congress(I) though he was "considering the situation".

The turn-about of the MP's has set Maneka's projected party off to a shaky start. It has also upset her plan to announce a list of at least 10 defecting MP's by October 15, the day the party is slated for launch. As one of her aides quipped: "There are Congress(I) men galore who are ready to defect, but who can guarantee that they will not redefect?"

Early this year, when Maneka left the prime minister's house and threatened to create fissures in the Congress(I)' cabal, the party high command watched the development with bated breath. Now it feels confident that it can play on Maneka's eagerness to 'enlist' MP's and present her with a few Trojan horses as gifts that have not been looked in the mouth.

—SUMIT MITRA

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PARLIAMENT

Rites Of Passage

"Frankly, I have certain reservations about the functioning of the Parliament."
—Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in the Lok Sabha on August 16, 1982

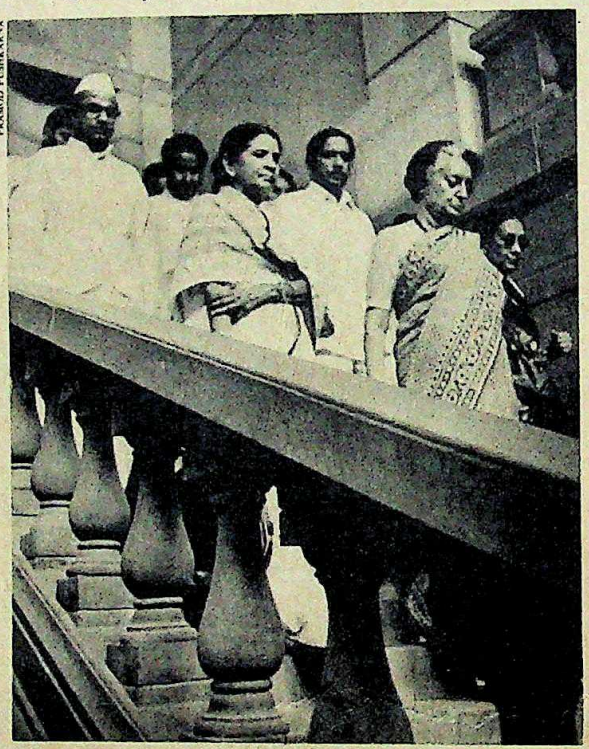
THERE is delicious irony in that acerbic statement. If the Government's ability to ram legislation through is any indication then Mrs Gandhi has little ground for her grouse. Despite the uproarious scenes over the Antulay affair, the Kuo Oil deal and the Bihar Press Bill, the Congress(I) has never faced any difficulty getting its legislative business through the House.

In spite of the furore of the monsoon session it was able to slip a mass of important legislation through, amending the Constitution, the Industrial Disputes Act, the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act and the Prevention of Blackmarketing and Maintenance of Essential Supplies Act, even repealing the Special Courts Act. Even during earlier sessions, the Government managed to get Parliament's sanction for the National Security Act and the Essential Services Maintenance Act without too much difficulty.

Opposition Weakness: It is no secret, however, that the Government's success in Parliament stems from the Opposition's inability to nail down the Government on any specific issue. Says a Union minister: "Where is the Opposition? They are hardly in touch with the masses. Do they really know what is happening outside the Parliament? They have hardly anything to discuss in the House and only the newspapers come to their rescue occasionally." It is also true that the Opposition has never been able to paralyse Parliament in the fashion that the Congress(I) was able to during its stint in opposition.

Mrs Gandhi too has kept away from Parliament most of the time. This is probably because she is certain that nothing can go wrong. Her confidence is such that for the first time during her 13 years in power she skipped a full two weeks of Parliament and went off to the US and Japan between July 27 and August 8. On many sensitive issues like the Antulay affair and corruption allegations against her Cabinet ministers, she has stayed away from debates, comfortable in the knowledge that nothing will come of them. She has intervened only when a no-confidence motion is tabled against her.

But while Parliament seems to be serving her ends perfectly, Mrs Gandhi's statement has only confirmed the Opposition's doubts about her intentions. Says Lal Krishna Advani, the general secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party, "This statement of Mrs Gandhi only confirms our apprehensions that she regards the institution of Parliament as a nuisance because it puts the spotlight on her Government's shortcomings and weaknesses in a manner which no other forum does." Adds Harkishan Singh Surjeet, a Communist Party of India (Marxist), Rajya Sabha MP: "The way the scenario is changing against the Congress(I), Mrs Gandhi has become intolerant and she doesn't want any discussion on the failures of her Government on the economic front. In fact, she is not prepared to face any public criticism. She wants us to give up our democratic rights to expose her misdeeds and she is looking for a way to take away that right."


PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Mrs Gandhi leaving Parliament: legislative success

Technical Success: Opposition doubts about Mrs Gandhi's intentions apart, in purely technical terms, Parliament has done quite well for itself. The 200-odd staff of the Parliament Secretariat reel off impressive statistics to prove that this Parliament has been uncommonly effective in tackling its appointed work. Parliamentary records have revealed that when both houses of Parliament were prorogued last month, they had cleared 184 bills during the last eight sessions which have been held since Mrs Gandhi's triumphant return to power in January 1980. Of these 48 were passed during the last two sessions— an average of 23 bills per session of the Lok Sabha—which is a record not surpassed during the two years of the Emergency.

What is more, Parliament's smooth functioning is not confined to legislative matters. In fact, the Secretariat's figures show that only 30 per cent of Parliament's time is spent on legislative business. The remaining 70 per cent is devoted to financial and non-legislative matters like question hour, attention motions, short discussions, zero hours, no-confidence motions and adjournment motions.

Bhishma Narain Singh, minister for Parliamentary affairs and Mrs Gandhi's man Friday is quick to deny that Mrs Gandhi's statement implies a certain lack of faith in Parliament. Says Singh: "Mrs Gandhi's faith in Parliamentary democracy can be confirmed from the number of sittings of both the houses of Parliament during the last two years. We have given maximum time to raising important national issues in both the houses of the Parliament." According to Singh the Congress(I) has done far better than the Janata government during the first two years of Congress(I) rule. He points out that the Lok Sabha had 203 sittings and worked for 1,407 hours against 1978 with 1,185 working hours in 1978 during Janata Party rule. In 1980 bills were introduced in the Lok Sabha 139 were passed as against 100 bills duced and 83 approved during Janata two years.

Singh also claimed that his government has given out the maximum amount of information on official matters. During the first two years of Congress(I) rule, the Department of Parliamentary Affairs laid on the table of the house papers as against 3,307 papers during and 1979. Singh also adds that the government extended the usual eight hours Lok Sabha session by more than 60 days between 1980–81. The Rajya Sabha also sat for 1,124 hours on 179 days in 1980 and 1981 as against 875 hours in 1978 and 1979.

Important Indication: Another

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...dication of the healthy functioning of ...entary democracy is the number of ...ises fulfilled by the various ministries. ...ssurances are made during debates ...MP's seek information which is not ...ble with the ministers at that time. ...this happens the House is assured that ...formation will be collected and laid on ...ble of the House. Till the monsoon ...on of Parliament, the Department of ...entary Affairs had culled 8,134 as...ises from the proceedings of both hou... ...Parliament and implementation re... ...were laid on the tables of both the houses in the case of over 7,000 assurances. During the Janata regime, by comparison, only 3,818 assurances were implemented by the various ministries.

Opposition leaders claim that they deserve a good deal of the credit for the volume of business transacted in the last two years. Says Pramila Dandavate, a Janata Party MP, "We in the opposition have given maximum cooperation to the ruling party on issues of national importance. But the behaviour of the Congress(I) when it was in opposition was atrocious and destructive. Even now they are behaving irresponsibly in West Bengal and elsewhere where they are not in power. But for our cooperation, they would not have succeeded in Parliament."

Mrs Gandhi, for one, is said to be irked by what she takes to be personal attacks by the Opposition, skirting policy issues. But opposition leaders say that her attacks only prove their point that she is out to destroy Parliament. H.N. Bahuguna asserts: "If she is committed to destroy parliamentary democracy, we are also equally determined to protect it. Let us see who wins ultimately."

—PRABHU CHAWLA

...RATES

Moving On

NO-CONFIDENCE motions hold few terrors for the Congress(I) which enjoys a two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha. Yet party leaders and Cabinet ministers left nothing to chance when their supremo Mrs Gandhi faced her third no-confidence motion since her return to power in January 1980. Most Congress(I) speakers were no match for the scathing opposition attack by Atal Behari Vajpayee, Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna, Charan Singh, K.P. Unnikrishnan and Ram Bilas Paswan, but the motion was defeated with the largest ever number of MP's voting against: as against the 110 votes in favour, 351 voted against it, the highest figure in Mrs Gandhi's 13 years in office. Once before, in 1963, 346 MP's had rejected a censure motion introduced by J.B. Kripalani against Jawaharlal Nehru's government.

When Congress(I) leaders came to know of the Opposition's intentions to introduce a no-confidence motion on the last day of the monsoon session, Mrs Gandhi directed her senior Cabinet colleagues, party functionaries and prominent MP's to remain in Delhi. Over a dozen MP's including Mr. Shukla, who were out of Delhi were summoned and given a thorough briefing.

Earlier, the important ministries of finance, home, law and company affairs, works and housing, tourism, labour, petroleum, education, agriculture and planning were directed to prepare brief notes on major achievements of the Government on various fronts. These notes—28 in all—were given to ministers at a meeting convened by Bhishma Narain Singh on August 14, which was, incidentally, a second Saturday when government offices were closed.

Secret List: In this meeting also, a list of 28 Congress(I) speakers, including six Cabinet ministers was drawn up. The names, which were kept secret till the last moment, were chosen keeping opposition speakers in mind. For example, Shukla was to reply to Bahuguna's charges because he knew Bahuguna's weaknesses well. Similarly, H.K.L. Bhagat would take on Vajpayee because, like Vajpayee, he was from Delhi and an equally good orator. K.K. Murthy, a Harijan MP from Andhra Pradesh, was enlisted at the last moment to counter the opposition charge about increasing atrocities on Harijans. Ultimately, however, Mrs Gandhi had to make up for the poor defence put up by her party colleagues on her behalf. The division was on the predictable lines.

Nehru, Shastri and Desai: not short of confidence

Last fortnight's no-confidence motion proved one thing: Mrs Gandhi's statement that such motions were aimed at her personally, had a ring of truth. Of the 21 no-confidence motions introduced in the Lok Sabha since 1963, 16 were against Mrs Gandhi which means she was called upon to defend her government more than once every year in her 13 years of power. Her father, on the other hand, faced only one no-confidence motion on August 19, 1963. Opposition leaders could not bring no-confidence motions against him earlier as they did not enjoy the 10 per cent minimum support required. Soon after Nehru's death, Lal Bahadur Shastri faced three motions in less than 18 months.

Quality Decline: The Congress(I), when it was in the Opposition, brought only one no-confidence motion against Morarji Desai's ministry. Moved by C.M. Stephen in May 1978, the motion was rejected by a voice vote after being discussed for over nine hours. The second motion against Desai could not be voted because he tendered his resignation after losing majority support.

The time spent in discussing no-confidence motions has been decreasing. A motion brought against Shastri's ministry in September 1964 by N.C. Chatterjee was discussed for as long as 24 hours and spread over five days. The motion was defeated by 307 votes to 50. As against this marathon debate, Jyotirmoy Bosu's motion against Mrs Gandhi's government in May 1975 was disposed of within six hours.

A parliamentary correspondent, who has spent long hours listening to the people's representatives, sums up progress on this score: "There was a time when we used to sit spell-bound in the press gallery and listen to each and every speaker because each one of them had something new to say. But now they just repeat themselves."

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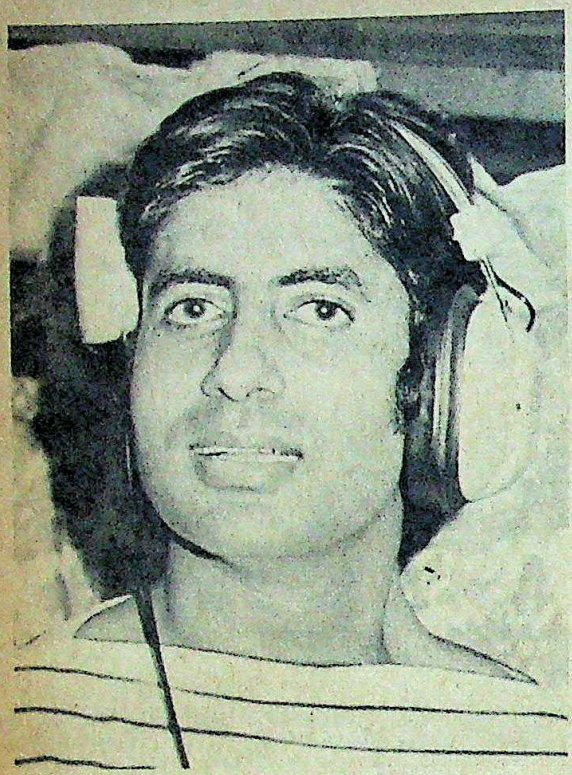

Amitabh: tremendous determination

AMITABH BACHCHAN

Back From The Brink

WHEN he took the first faltering footsteps, it was watched with the same anticipation that an infant might arouse. Towering over the two doctors who flanked him, a suction tube protruding from his stomach strapped securely in place, the lanky superstar took his first steps in almost a month on August 22. Later the same day Amitabh Bachchan sat up in bed, selected music from the roughly 40 cassettes lying next to him, switched on his Walkman and gave his 20-day growth of salt and pepper beard a much-needed trim.

It was a triumph for the team of doctors who had fought for the star's very existence. For more than 20 days it had been a cliff-hanging experience, a grim battle that on more than one occasion seemed almost lost (INDIA TODAY, August 31). Said one doctor who has watched him closely: "Miracles come from above. This is a medical feat, a real feat brought about by the best care any human being could have hoped for. His recovery took a little bit of everything; a major factor was his own good fortune, his luck. But in addition he got the undivided attention of a good medical team, and tremendous support from his family. But most of all I think it was his own desire to get well, he showed a tremendous determination to pull out of it."

Breakthrough: The process of recovery had been agonisingly slow. And repeated complications kept the team of four doctors, backed by Breach Candy Hospital's registrars, house surgeons, physicians and nurses, constantly on their toes. Each time a micro-organism responsible for the internal infection was identified and hit by an antibiotic, another resistant strain would come up to replace it. Finally, in mid-August, pus samples sent to London's Guy's Hospital showed that Pipril and Amikacin, two antibiotics not available in the country, would do the trick. Internal washes of the wonder drugs were prepared, his abdomen loaded with them, and the long-awaited breakthrough finally occurred.

In the last few days of August the improvement became tangible. The four corrugated-rubber drains in his abdomen had been replaced by a single catheter to draw out the last traces of pus, intravenous tubes to monitor his bodily impulses had all been removed and he was eating a solid diet which included six eggs a day, milk, curds, rice and on one occasion, even toast. The tracheal tube which had aided his breathing through the crisis had disappeared, and a slightly hoarse variation of the famous Bachchan voice was once more heard in conversation with his wife Jaya, brother Ajitabh and the other members of his anxious family.

The immaculately clad superstar in a white kurta-pyjama was seen taking regular walks within the confines of the intensive care unit (ICU). On at least one occasion, he was seen peering out of the glass porthole, set in the ICU doorway. Indications were that in the next three weeks Bachchan will be discharged from Breach Candy to begin a long convalescence at his Juhu home. "But he will be taken straight home from the ICU," said the surgeon who is treating him. "In his weakened state he can't be exposed to the hordes of visitors who would stream in to see him." It will, however, obviously be a long while before the most famous face in filmdom makes its appearance on the screen again.

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

HIJACKING

Terror On The Tarmac

HE CALLED himself 'M... Singh' and never did a name... scenario better. The 30-... Sikh, dressed in a colourful medley ... shirt, orange corduroy trousers, a ... turban and gleaming high-heeled s... deadly serious when he hijacked ... Airlines Flight 492 to Lahore on A...

PUNJAB

Close Shave

EVEN as Manjit Singh was ... ing the Indian Airlines ... to Lahore, Punjab Chief M... Darbara Singh was dodging b... Rahon, 70 km from Jullundur, ... he had gone to inaugurate a girls' ... school along with Education M... Harcharan Singh Ajnala. Altogether ... bomb and two HE 36 grenades ... thrown—the first hit Darbara ... chest but did not explode, the ... exploded and injured 40, ... Ajnala and some schoolchildren. ... third fell on the wet ground but ... go off. Darbara says he grabbed ... bomb that hit him and "threw it ...

The police named three young ... all former Naxalites-turned-followers ... Bhindranwale, as the attackers. ... charan Singh alias Channi ... nabbed on the spot as he was ... escape, Gurmit Singh, 28, was ... near Talwandi Fattu village ... Jullundur in an encounter, ...

Darbara Singh: dodging ...

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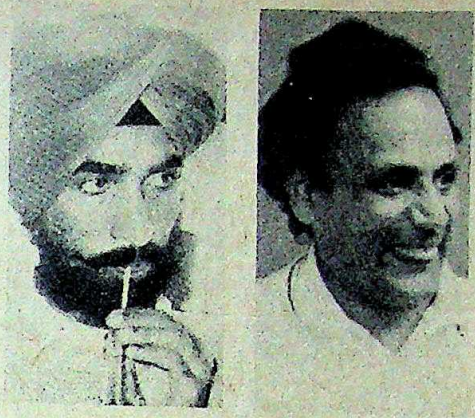
...over six hours later, 'Museebat' lay ... on the tarmac at Amritsar's Raja Sansi ... his body riddled with bullets and the ... hijacking of an Indian Airlines air- ... 15 days was over in just seven hours. ... There was the inevitable sense of *deja vu* ... the affair which, until the last stages, ... the August 4 hijacking of another ... to Lahore by Gurbaksh Singh. Flight ... was on a hopping journey from Bombay ... Delhi—taking in Udaipur, Jodhpur ... pur on the way. The hijacker, after- ... identified as Manjit Singh, an electri- ... Amritsar, boarded the aircraft at ... Soon after the plane took off from ... at 12.35 p.m., the Sikh slipped into



Manjit (left) and Mohan: words to blows

the cockpit, brandished a gun and a home-made bomb and told Captain Surendra Mohan to fly to Lahore where he wanted him to refuel and take the plane to Libya. Police sources believe that Manjit carried the gun aboard hidden in his turban and the bomb in the two-in-one he was carrying with him. Passengers recall that he had replaced his turban with a black cloth wrapped around his head.

Over Lahore, the plane circled the airport 42 times, according to passenger B.L. Sahani. On the ground, the authorities had effectively blocked the runway with trucks. Finally, running short of fuel, the plane touched down at Amritsar at 2.40 p.m.,

...Singh, 28, of Rahon itself is believed to ... have escaped to Chowk Mehta, Bhind- ...wale's headquarters.

The chief minister must be feeling ...more and more insecure every day—this ... the fourth attempt on his life in recent ...months. The others took place at a public ...function in January in Naroor Panchhta ...in Kapurthala district, and at functions ...in Amritsar district. His house in ...Jadala village in Jullundur was also ...attacked last month.

Leakage: What is worse, top secret ...information on his whereabouts is leak- ...ing to the extremists. Police source ...reveal that another murderous plan was ...hatched in a gurudwara near Rahon ...recently to get rid of Darbara. Accord- ...ing to Punjab Police chief Birbal Nath ...the chief minister was apparently to be ...shot down while visiting a *dera* of a sant ...in Dumeli village in Kapurthala: as the ...area is out of bounds to uniformed men, ...Darbara would temporarily be without ...his armed guards. Darbara changed his ...mind at the last moment and sent Social ...Welfare Minister Jagat Ram—police ...had a hard time keeping half-a-dozen ...armed Nihangs away from Ram—but ...the attackers already knew that Dar- ...bara would not be coming to Dumeli. ...How they learnt of his movements, ...known only to the concerned deputy ...commissioner and the district police ...chief, is a mystery. A senior police ...officer says that an attack had been ...planned since a dozen grenades were ...reported missing from a defence depot. ...The police are also concerned ...because suspects under interrogation at ...Amritsar have reportedly revealed that ...a hit men had been hired from a West ...German country with the help of funds from ...Canada. The police also say that they ...are hunting for arms said to have been ...smuggled in from the Middle East by the ...extremists. The chief minister's cryptic comment on the alleged foreign link is that "there is some truth in it and we are making full investigations."

Faced with escalating extremism, police are apparently resorting to the time-honoured 'encounters'. Officially, four Sikhs—two in Amritsar, and one each in Kapurthala and Jullundur—have

Gurmeet Singh's corpse: bloody end

been killed in encounters. The chiefs of the two Akali Dals believe, however, that the figure is much higher—50, according to Randhir Singh Cheema, acting chief of the Talwandi faction. Cheema appointed a private four-member commission to investigate these deaths and says: "We shall take the issue to the Human Rights Commission." He invited lawyer V.M. Tarkunde and journalist Kuldip Nayar to join the panel. As for the violence and the bomb attacks, he said they had been "engineered by the Government to discredit popular movements launched by the Akalis to achieve complete autonomy". Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, leader of the other Akali Dal, has also announced a similar probe panel.

Continued Belligerence: The Akalis, in fact, are as belligerent as ever. No Akali leader has condemned the violence. Cheema even went a step further: quoting Mahatma Gandhi advising Sikhs to take up arms if the promises made to them by the Congress were not honoured. Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee President G.S. Tohra told a congregation at Dumeli on August 21 that the Sikhs were being forced to take up arms. Meanwhile the communal fabric was further torn: in Patiala Central Jail, Hindu Suraksha Samiti leader Pawan Sharma was beaten up by Akali inmates, and in Budhlada, the police arrested 120 people to restore calm after a shop was burnt and six persons were injured in stone throwing.

Darbara Singh, not a bit unnerved by the latest attempt on his life, seems more determined than ever to stamp out terrorism from the state. He is still confident that he can put an end to violence and declares: "I shall isolate the extremists who are backed by criminals and fanatics, and bring total calm to the state." He appealed for cooperation from "secular people who love Punjab" and promised to streamline the police and intelligence network. The anticipated measures will undoubtedly go a long way to reassure a panicky and insecure general public. But the situation in Punjab is best summed up by a Rahon resident, Ram Singh: "If a man with maximum security can be attacked like this, only God can help us."

—GOBIND THUKRAL

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nearly three hours after it had taken off from Bombay. Then the long wait began. Says Sahani: "The hijacker said there were three other cronies who had not turned up." Adds Anita Sanchita, another passenger: "The hijacker was quite a nice man and very polite, but we were scared."

Demands: For some time there was a lull in proceedings. Manjit laid out his demands, which included the payment of Rs 8 lakh in German marks, the transfer of power in Punjab to the Akali Dal with Prakash Singh Badal as chief minister, and the release of jailed Sikh *granthis*. The hijacker wanted Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to come to Amritsar for negotiations, which he said should be held in the presence of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. The authorities at the airport kept the talks going, even reading the Guru Granth Sahib to Manjit.

Soon the passengers realised that something concrete was being attempted. At about 6 p.m., the auxiliary power plant of the aircraft was switched off shutting down the air-conditioning. Ten passengers in the forward section of the plane watched the drama develop from close by; says one: "Within the next 20 minutes the air inside the aircraft became unbearable, and passengers became agitated." Mrs P. Sathe and her infant child fell sick and Manjit allowed them to leave the aircraft. A French couple was the next to complain and Manjit let them, too, leave. The man jumped to the tarmac easily, but the woman had difficulty, so the gallant Manjit made a rope of his turban and the other passengers lowered her to the ground. A fifth passenger was permitted to leave to fetch drinking water for the others.

The stage was set for the final act. Most of the passengers had been forced to move back, and the rear and emergency exits had been opened to let in air. Manjit was strolling up and down the aisle, flicking a black cigarette lighter on and off—he had borrowed it earlier from a passenger to light his bomb, which he had placed near the front exit. A little later, Manjit stood near the front exit, the gun in his right hand, his left clutching the door panel. Behind him, a passenger who rose from his seat to join the general rush to the rear, saw a tempting back turned towards him.

Scuffle: The passenger pushed, feebly. Manjit staggered, but held on to the handle. Angry now, he fired into the air. An eyewitness reports that the police outside who had taken up positions around the aircraft also fired into the air, for some inexplicable reason. Captan Mohan and co-pilot Captain

R.S. Choudhary burst ... their cockpit the captain ... ing: "Which bastard did ... Manjit had taken a step ... and collided with Mohan ... Choudhary. All three ... down in a scrambling ... the aisle.

A passenger says ... either the captain or ... pilot got hold of "an axe-like thing" ... attempted to hit Manjit. The blow ... ineffective due to the cramped conditions ... the same time, a Punjab Police commando ... sten-gun flourishing dangerously, ... through the right emergency exit. ... "Where is he?" He butted Manjit ... gun on the head and the neck. ... stunned, had lost his gun in the ... and was pushed away by the pilots ... onto the constable who butted him ... few passengers got into the act and ... the staggering Sikh. He stumbled out ... door and crumpled on the tarmac. A ... of shots rang out.

By then, most of the passengers had ... though the rear exit. The two other ... cemen who entered just then—disguised ... sweepers with left hands on brooms ... right behind the back holding ... guns—were entirely superfluous. ... were the commandos who had arrived ... nearby airfield and were waiting for ... ness to move. The Punjab Police ... ever, had pre-empted their strike. ... one passenger calls a rather "ham-fisted" ... manner: the action which could have ... in disaster if sten-guns and pistols ... off inside the Boeing, owed its success ... much to the pilots and the passengers ... the police.

Contradictions: For some time ... death, there were conflicting reports ... and where Manjit had been killed. ... Amrik Singh Pooni, deputy inspector ... neral, Criminal Investigation Department ... Chandigarh: "The hijacker was killed ... inside the plane and then thrown out." ... is a direct contradiction of passengers' ... counts. Indian Airlines Chairman ... Billimoria and Minister of State for ... and Civil Aviation Khurshid Alam ... confused matters a lot at a press conference ... at New Delhi's airport at midnight ... August 20: Billimoria contradicted ... and Khan kept his mouth firmly shut.

The hurried cremation of Manjit ... also stoked suspicions. The police ... say that this was done—after ... fingerprints—to prevent Manjit's ... tivists from claiming the body and ... political capital out of it. Manjit comes ... an activist Sikh family, devout follower ... Bhindranwale, and leaves behind ... Sharanjit Kaur, and a five-year-

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Ranji. His parents, Dalip Singh and Kaur could not be traced.
an obvious attempt to stifle interest, mouths are tightly shut; neither the ities nor the pilots are talking. The Government has even banned the ure of anything relating to the hijack- the death. Senior policemen suspect funds come from Bhindranwale.

Well Supplied: For an out-of-work elec- the hijacker seemed to have un- money. He informed Sahani and the that he had travelled on that parti- ght at least 15 times in the recent past. ing his movements before the hijack, discovered that he had travelled to Delhi and purchased new clothes, a ase and several cassettes and also a g to carry them in. A receipt for the ases was found in the bag. He later Jaipur and then to Udaipur.

Police are believed to have connected acking with the bomb attack on Chief er Darbara Singh the same day in e escaped but 36 people were injured. of the suspected bombers, Gurmeet was shot dead last fortnight in an ounter'. As in the Manjit Singh case, the ities are playing matters down. Said a police officer cryptically: "We are the net on the big fish."

A RAINA with GOBIND THUKRAL in Amritsar

WEST BENGAL

hatterjee's olly

Chatterjee in front of his ill-fated building

THE MAKER of Calcutta's tallest building is now in the vortex of the city's hottest scandal. Benoy Kumar Chatterjee, 55, architect, entrepreneur, shipper, publisher, film producer and about-town, tried to add another feather to his cap—as a fund-raiser—and found himself looked rather out of place. Last week, sleuths of the Calcutta Police and the State Investigation Bureau stormed into a hotel room on Jatin Das Road, in a quiet residential area of south Calcutta. They nabbed Chatterjee from the toilet where he had locked himself up with a revolver and 14 rounds of ammunition.

Chatterjee, a top-drawer architect and businessman of the country, was among the most sought-after designers a decade ago when his company built *The Hindustan Times* building and the American Center in New Delhi and the new royal palace in Kathmandu and a giant shopping-cum-entertainment complex in Oman. With the passage of time, his skill deteriorated as he completed an 18-storey monstrosity in Calcutta, the Chatterjee International Centre, which is listing heavily to one side, and got busy switching careers to be a 'businessman'. He was arrested as the master mind of a Rs 6-crore investment racket after his wife's film production business had flopped, his own shipping company had run aground and his professional reputation had sunk in the quagmire of shady transactions.

Deposits: According to a complaint lodged by a depositor in Chatterjee's investment company, Taj Investments, he had invited deposits promising a highly lucrative 48 per cent annual interest, but stopped all payments since early this year. The complainant, Kamal Das, told the police that while taking his money Chatterjee had painted a rosy picture of his ventures, including that of the contract for a section of Calcutta's subway, and a cement plant in Rajasthan.

Das said he deposited Rs 4,000 with the company last year, in two instalments. But the payment of monthly interest stopped in January this year; Chatterjee and his men would not meet his request for refund of the deposit. The Deputy Superintendent of Police of the state Investigation Bureau, T.K. Bhattacharya, said that Chatterjee had used the same method to collect from the public nearly Rs 6 crore in one year.

When Bhattacharya and officers from the Calcutta Police visited the south Calcutta hotel, they found that Chatterjee had checked in under an assumed name, 'S. Sinha', and given a false address in Patna. He had already been on anticipatory bail; the court ordered him to make himself available to the investigating authority at all times. From the court he drove back straight to his Alipur home where a family member said no press call would be answered. Even so, with his investment scheme already busted, Chatterjee can ill afford to brush aside queries from his 12,000-odd depositors, particularly those who had invested with legitimate cash. Said one of them: "The company was a two-month wonder. Payments stopped in the third month."

Previous Gambles: Chatterjee had obviously taken the cue from the runaway success of Sanchaita Investments (see INDIA TODAY, February 28, 1982), the nearly Rs 150-crore investment swindle that collapsed recently, taking with it large chunks of many Calcutta *bhadraloks*' savings. But, while Sanchaita kept itself going for at least four years, Chatterjee could not hold out for more than a few months. Apparently his enterprise was ill-timed and soon the official crack-down on his company had begun.

The recent arrest of Chatterjee was, however, only the latest in a series of hard luck episodes in his see-saw career. Last year, he was blacklisted by the Calcutta Metropolitan Railway authorities as it was found that the quality of his work for a section of the 16.4 km subway, now nearing completion, had fallen far below specifications. Apart from the Rs 60 crore assignment being withdrawn from him, he was heavily penalised and notices were issued to other Central Government projects, warning against him.

A few years ago, *Asia World*, a glossy magazine launched by him, largely to extol his prospective construction clients in West Asia, closed down just as abruptly as it had started. Almost simultaneously, two of his three-ship fleet of freighters, plying on the Gulf route, reportedly capsized on the high seas. After a protracted battle over claims, the insurance company finally paid.

Eyesore: The ungainly building on Calcutta's Chowringhee, Chatterjee International Centre, is the only one that he built in Calcutta. It was originally planned as 'Grindlay's Centre', as Grindlay's Bank bought the land, located in a prime area, from the classy and centenarian Bengal Club. However, the Central Government refused permission to Grindlay's Bank to build in India, and Chatterjee bought it over, reportedly for a song. But he built in such a hurry, and with such obsessive passion for gaining the maximum out of every square inch of space, that the 200-foot-tall structure is now an eyesore on Chowringhee's jagged but beautiful skyline.

The structure is partly illegal, has no fire exit and the lift is unworkable. The building began tilting to one side, reportedly because of poor underground pilings. Its 100-odd tenants, who had paid cash in advance, felt

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let down and refused to pay rent, electricity and service charges. As a result, the Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation cut off power supply to the building for a few months last year. Calcutta Corporation is now preparing to serve Chatterjee with a demolition notice as the building does not conform to the norms set by the Committee on Tall Buildings.

Comments: Architect C.P. Kukreja, who made the Jawaharlal Nehru University complex in New Delhi with Chatterjee, described him as one of the "leading civil engineers of the country". He said he had to part company with Chatterjee, whose associate he was, in the early '70s as he found that "the man is obsessed with quick gains and has been drifting away from professionalism". Echoes Joseph Allen Stein, the American architect based in New Delhi who built the India International Centre: "Chatterjee is an excellent professional; I wish he were less ambitious." Kukreja adds that Chatterjee's area of specialisation is the 'shell', comprising ultra-thin structural membranes, which has revolutionised construction concepts in the last two decades.

Nattily dressed, and always full of Anglo-Saxon pleasantries, Chatterjee's stock was once as high as his building in Calcutta's party circuits. Now he may suddenly find it hard to sell his 'shells'.

—SUMIT MITRA with SUMANTA SEN in Calcutta

TRIPURA

Quiet Exit

WAS Bijoy Hrangkhal, the flashy 40-year-old leader of Tripura tribals, kidnapped from his village hut at Kamalachhora in the early hours of August 14 or had he run away to join fellow extremists now in hiding in the Chittagong hill tracts across the border? Last fortnight, this question was on everybody's lips in Tripura. Hrangkhal had earlier confessed to being the brain behind the Mandai massacre in the state two years ago in which 300 people had been killed and had, since his release on bail in September 1980, been leading an apparently peaceful existence under constant police surveillance.

Caught off guard, the police discovered clear evidence of a planned departure. Not only had he taken along his 18-year-old pregnant wife Linda, but also all his suitcases and trunks. Even Linda's cosmetics were gone. When the police managed to establish Hrangkhal's escape route they were told by villagers that although he and Linda were accompanied by others, never for a moment had it appeared that they were being taken against their will.

With about four months to go before the polls, the Marxist ministry of Tripura, and in particular Chief Minister Nripen Chakraborty, are greatly embarrassed. Having taken Hrangkhal's word that his days of violence were over, they had done their best to rehabilitate him economically. It is no secret that they had facilitated a loan from a rural bank for his husking mill at the village, and also funds to set up a rubber plantation. A cinema permit had further been on its way. The man who was held responsible for organising one of the most gruesome carnages in the tiny state suddenly seemed to turn into a blue-eyed boy of the administration, constantly moving around in police vehicles.

Chakraborty: highly embarrassed

Futile Incentives: To incredulous spectators the administration's explanation was that the pampering aimed at winning over a deadly foe of the state's 16 lakh Bengalis. Now with pressures mounting, Chief Minister Chakraborty and his aides understandably have no other alternative but to maintain that Hrangkhal was kidnapped by the Jamatia group of extremists who are opposed to the Halam faction to which he belongs. According to them, the purpose of the kidnappers was to organise his trial for having "betrayed the cause and setted down to a comfortable life while others were still struggling it out in the inhospitable terrain of the Chittagong hill tracts".

But even Chakraborty's colleagues in the party are sceptical. Said Nati Rupini, 40, chairman of the newly stituted autonomous district council for bals and himself a member of the Hr group: "It should be clear that Hrang duped the administration, got the brea time he needed to make his plans and away." He added: "Have you ever hear kidnappers allowing their tim time to pack up his belongings before they him?"

Even within the adm tration there are people wh that the policy makers had a bit too lenient with H khal. A senior police officer INDIA TODAY: "After the granted him bail, the best would have been to attach with the National Security as he was too dangerous kept outside. But this go ment does not believe in pre tive arrests." By all accounts the M leadership and particularly the chief m had taken a bold gamble when they de to befriend Hrangkhal and thereby wa those sections of tribals who had swi loyalty to the extremists. But right n seems that they have lost whatever gr they had gained.

Current Strategy: Three days a disappearance, news came in that H made it to the Chittagong hill tra Bangladesh. Clearly he is seeking to once more with his old friends in the lawed Mizo National Front (MNF) wh operate from that region. Three years Hrangkhal had met the MNF leader La in New Delhi and the two rebels had be to coordinate their activities. Disapp moderates in the Tripura tribal leade could do little about this as Hrangkh the potent force of younger tribals u under his influence. The MNF itself has lying low during the lengthy peace which Laldenga had in Delhi. But with failure and Laldenga's extradition, this rebels have once again become aggr Hrangkhal presumably decided that was the most opportune moment to re and strike. His timing was obviously as he took the Government comp unawares.

Hrangkhal (left, seated) with MNF leaders: forging new ties

According to Central intelligence cies here this would also be to the advan of the MNF. The recurrence of any large terrorism in Tripura will give them needed relief by forcing the army to w attention from Mizoram which is at under a military vigil which no rebel And who but Hrangkhal, their C brother rebel, can manage that?

—SUMANTA SEN in

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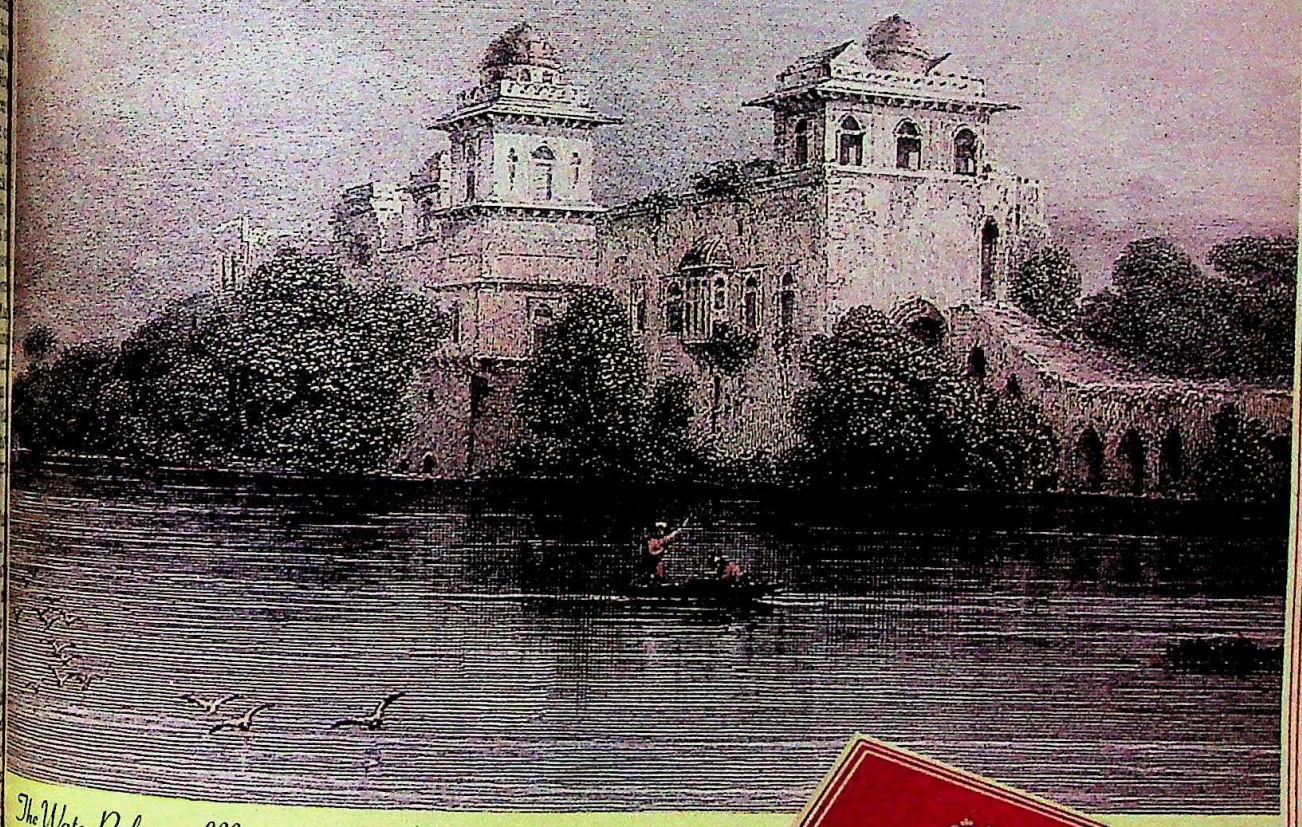
For those who value taste



The Water Palace — Mandoo
Painted by Copley Fielding
Sketched by Capt. R. Elliot, R.N.
Engraved by W. Floyd

A Contemporary Classic

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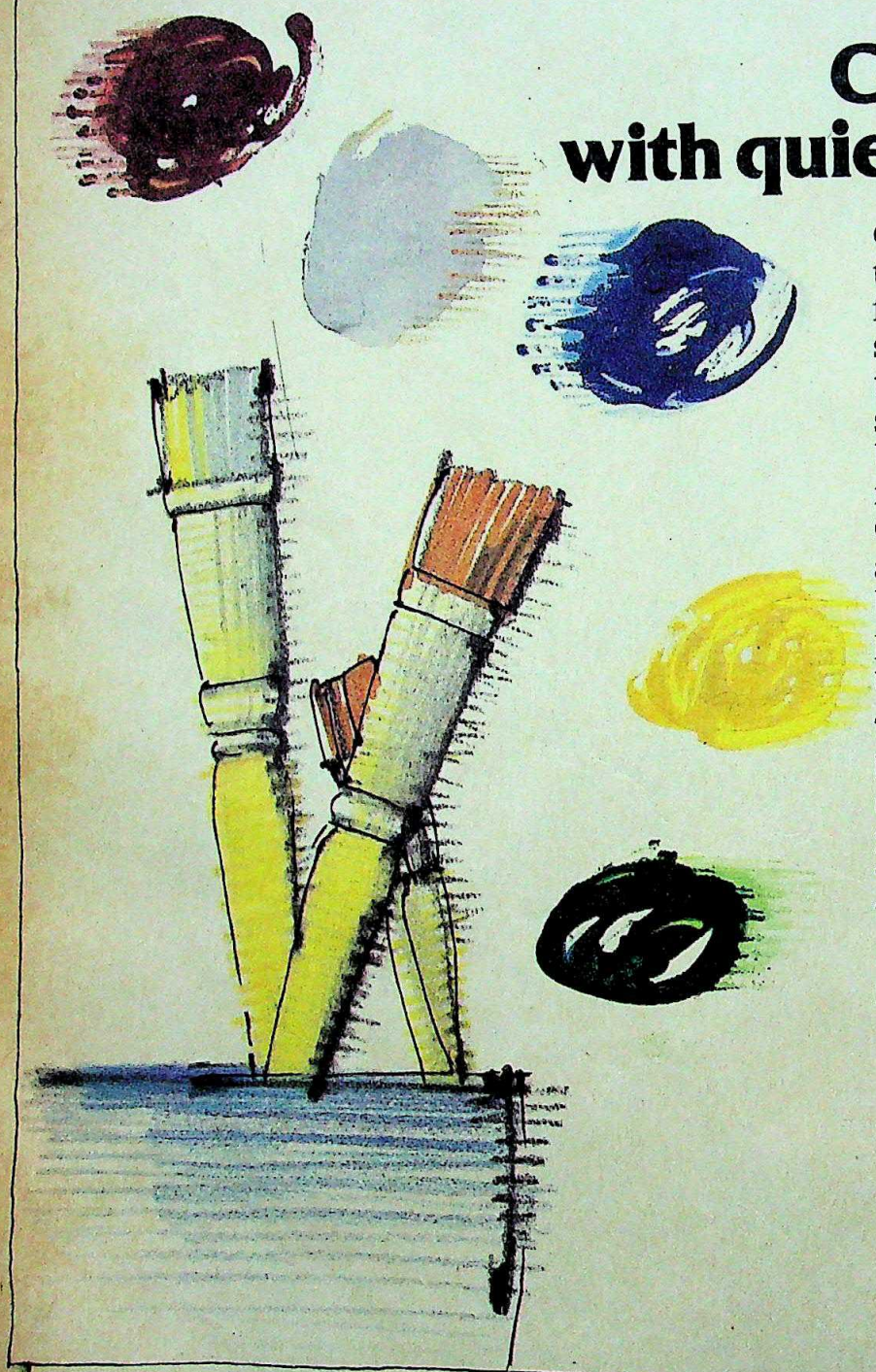
RAYMOND'S WINTER FASHIONS



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guide to the well-dressed male

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Rama Rao in Medak: drawing full houses

HRA PRADESH

olitical Potboiler

IN TAMIL Nadu MGR and NTR in Andhra Pradesh. That appears to be the developing plot in southern politics with 60-year-old film star N.T. Rama Rao's dramatic political debut that ming into a veritable potboiler. The pot is boiling, however, is that of the state gress(I) ruling party which has been on ver since Rao's fledgeling Telugu m party was born in March. With ons to the state legislative assembly four months away, the ruling party good reason to be jittery. Rama Rao's e-stop tours in recent weeks have been ng full houses culminating in a visit to eddy, the district headquarters of Mrs dhi's Medak constituency. Local gress(I) leaders grudgingly admitted he gathering was far larger than what Gandhi attracted prior to the January olls.

n fact, ever since he jumped into the ical fray in end-March, Rama Rao or s he is popularly known, has become a an opposition army. In the last month, oured all the 23 districts in the state a simple, effective campaign promise: old the self-respect of the Telugus" ovide a corruption-free government if voted to power. The campaign itself is pure film melodrama. He travels only in second class and his oratory is garnished with film-type rhetoric and eloquent gesticulations.

Persistent Rumours: Though the other opposition parties in the state have so far avoided jumping on NTR's bandwagon, there are presistent rumours that a section of the Congress(I) may switch their loyalties to NTR's regional party just before the elections. Their reasons are obvious. NTR's film star status and his huge fan following in the state is in itself a powerful vote bank, while the party's manifesto has an equally striking appeal. It propagates a distinct Telugu identity and culture and a decentralisation of power and decision-making.

NTR's election promises, however, do appear to be out of a dream sequence. He promises to provide good quality rice to the people at Rs 2 a kilo, free meals for poor children, unemployment doles and electricity and bus services for all villages. The state Finance Minister, Kona Prabhakar Rao, promptly attacked Rao's promises by claiming that, according to his calculations, the cost of NTR's promises works out to Rs 1,400 crore. NTR counters this by saying that "if the collection of bribes and flow of money into party funds is stopped, there will be enough money for the people".

That exchange is, however, typical of the strategy which the state Congress(I) has employed to combat the NTR threat, which, ironically enough, is straight out of one of the Telugu star's films with the villains attempting to tar his image and the hero finally emerging unblemished.

It started with Revenue Minister N. Janardhan Reddy's allegation in the legislative council last month that NTR had not filed in time the mandatory declaration for a seven-acre plot in Hyderabad used as a film studio and therefore he was illegally occupying government land. The significance, however, was that the allegation was raised during a debate on land-grabbing and the reference was obvious though the minister later hastily declared that "I am not calling NTR a land-grabber."

Embarrassment: Amid howls of protest from his fans, NTR challenged the minister to prove he was a land-grabber and punish him or resign. To add to Reddy's embarrassment, he got the dates mixed up in his allegation and NTR was quick to capitalise. "We bought the land in February, 1979 and not September as claimed by the minister," he said, "and I ceased to be a managing partner of the studio from August 1980, nearly two months before the area came under the urban ceiling laws." He also produced the sale deed and other relevant documents to prove his point, and angrily remarked: "They are trying to frame me because of my increasing popularity."

How this will affect the electoral showings is still to be seen. The large crowds attending his meetings are no indication of electoral support since many are there to see their hero in the flesh. But NTR is obviously taking his campaign seriously. He has personally selected his campaign workers who are given a four-day crash course at the party headquarters in the Ramakrishna Cine Studio in Hyderabad. The course is on the history of culture of the Telugus, political parties, planning and development in various sectors like agriculture, education and industry. Says the film star: "Ideology is not to be borrowed from abroad or libraries. To serve the people one does not look for words. Our programmes and policies will evolve from our work in Telugu land." Meanwhile, a record containing his speeches is scheduled for release this month. The record also contains songs from his latest film *Chanda Shaasanudu* (The Iron Man) about his ideals and values while the film itself is slated for release just weeks before the election, when the NTR factor in Andhra Pradesh politics faces its first major screen test.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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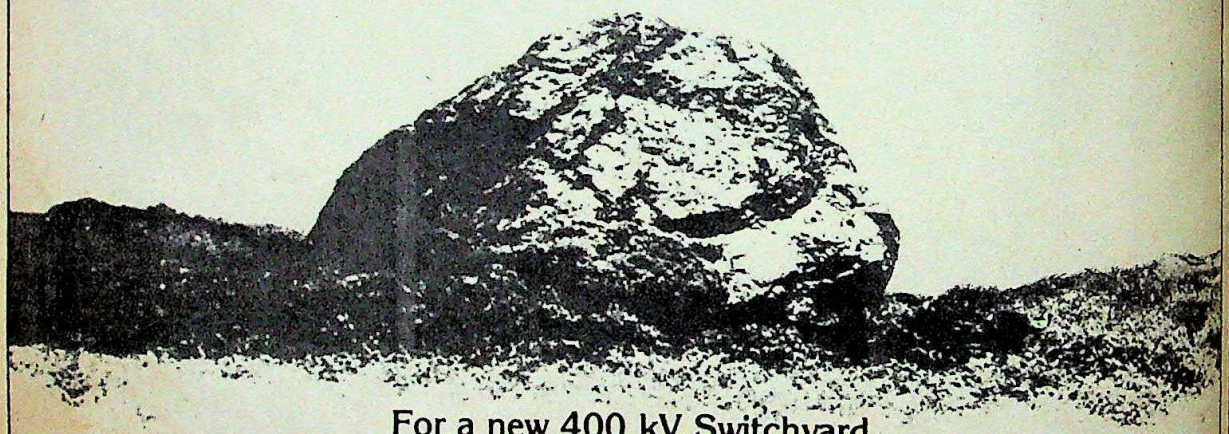
Move over, old friend.



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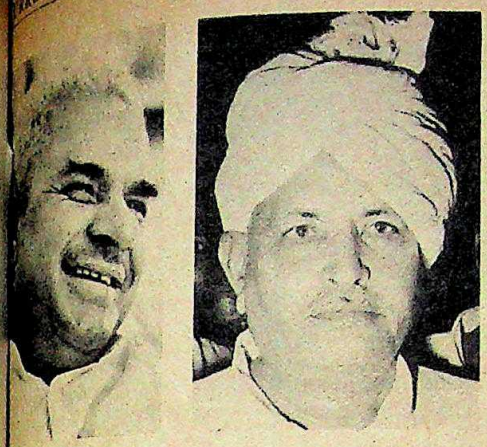

Bhajan Lal (left) and Sultan Singh: squabble over loyalty

ANA

Spoil' Split

THE FRUITS of political office seem to sour surprisingly rapidly, particularly across the border in Haryana which barely months ago witnessed 'For Sale' signs hanging around the of its most pious politicians. Now that ying and selling is over and the wily n Lal comfortably settled in the chief er's chair, the state seems headed for nother unsavoury confrontation. This onically enough, originates not from "rebels" but from the so-called sts", disgruntled over the manner in the spoils have been distributed.

The threat would not be so tangible not for the fact that it is spearheaded one other than Sultan Singh, the state president. Bhajan Lal, who owes his n to defectors, would like to fulfil his ge to them of just rewards. But Singh ally adamant that plum party posts e prerogative of the loyalists.

a meeting in Rohtak on July 23, declared flatly that no defector would gible for a Pradesh Congress Com- ee (I) post. When asked why a different rion was being applied for defectors in overnment and the party, Singh re- d that "I have not taken an oath under n Lal" and then went on to promise alists of 1977 and 1980 that they be given their due share of party posts. n Lal retaliated by ignoring Singh's set up a committee to coordinate the of the party and that of the Govern- "I'll listen to Sultan if he first listens Bhajan reportedly stormed at a isterial colleague.

ults: Two earlier proposals made by and accepted by the chief minister to be complied with: last month the were asked to submit details of their assets. None seems to have done so. A number of ministers have also ignored the party work assigned to them. Another persistent irritant between the chief minister and the party president is the treatment meted out to 'old' party workers by the defectors. Party loyalists at various levels have alleged harassment and victimisation by defectors who are now occupying ministerial positions. They are allegedly using the administrative machinery to silence critics. Transfers have become a convenient way of arm-twisting.

Ambala district is the worst hit by dissension. It has three ministers who joined Bhajan Lal after defeating Congress(I) candidates and then defected. They are reportedly settling their scores with their opponents who happen to be Congressmen. Frustrated and angry, 17 leading partymen from Naraingarh constituency, including party Vice-President A.N. Gupta, have alleged in a memorandum that Minister of State for Public Works Lal Singh has not only intimidated them by instigating false cases but has been disrespectful to party leader Indira Gandhi.

It was reported that at a meeting in village Natwal Lal Singh objected to the party flag and Mrs Gandhi's photograph saying: "I don't know Indira or the Congress party. I've won the election on my own strength. Mrs Gandhi had expelled me for six years but had to make me a minister." Lal Singh has denied the allegations of harassment but admitted that some relations of Congressmen have been transferred from his constituency.

In Rewari, officers are reported to have been shifted at the behest of Transport Minister Colonel Ram Singh, who defeated the sister of Union Agriculture Minister Rao Birendra Singh and later joined the Congress(I) to become a minister. In his constituency of Sirsa, Tourism Minister Lachman Das Arora was hooted down by Congress(I) workers at a meeting, and an infuriated minister had threatened to teach them a lesson. In Jind, the defeated Congress(I) candidate Mange Ram Gupta had alleged that Brij Mohan Singla of the Lok Dal, who won and later defected to the Congress(I) to become excise and taxation minister, was hounding his relations and supporters.

Growing Criticism: In Kalka, a number of Congress(I) workers are living under constant tension for they supported the official candidate Sukhdev Singh. Singh was defeated by his cousin Lachman Singh who defected to the Congress(I) to become the industry minister. In Rohtak, the President of the District Congress Committee(I), Subhash Batra has publicly drawn the attention of Sultan Singh to the fact that 'defector' ministers are making anti-Mrs Gandhi statements.

There is mounting criticism against the defectors who have been given ministerial berths. Bhajan Lal has admitted that the problem of their assimilation into the Congress(I) is not easily solved. He sought peace so that the party could be unified and function in coordination with the Government. He recently told a deputation from Ambala that the 'old' and 'new' party workers must reconcile themselves.

Bhajan Lal has realised that he cannot keep on ignoring Sultan Singh who has now emerged as a rallying point for the disgruntled Congressmen. The chief minister can draw some comfort from his majority in the legislature. But Sultan Singh is unimpressed and shows no signs of backing off. Bhajan Lal could rapidly discover that the business of buying lip service is quite an expensive one.

—GOBIND THUKRAL

MADHYA PRADESH

Turning Off The Tap

LAST month, when the state Government decided to wind up the ailing Madhya Pradesh Lift Irrigation Corporation, it was another example of the enormous cost of inefficiency in the Government. It also showed that Chief Minister Arjun Singh's policy of political appeasement was extremely expensive: one of the men responsible for its closure was Parshuram Singh Bhadoria, Congress(I) legislator from Bhind, who was appointed full-time chairman of the corporation. The organisation's collapse was particularly unfortunate in a state where less than a sixth of the net area sown has irrigation facilities.

When the corporation started operating in early 1977, it was supposed to sink tube-wells for cultivators on payment, and also set up its own tube-wells in areas where the land holdings were small. From these, the water was to be sold for neighbouring fields. Similarly, it was to sell water to cultivators after lifting it from rivers at suitable points.

By the time the corporation's closure

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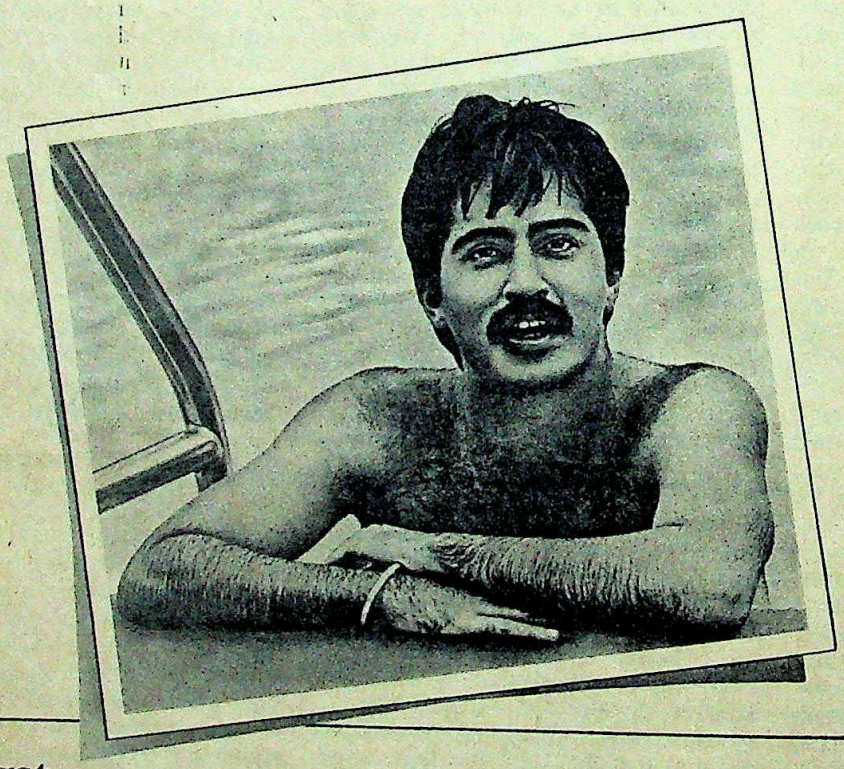
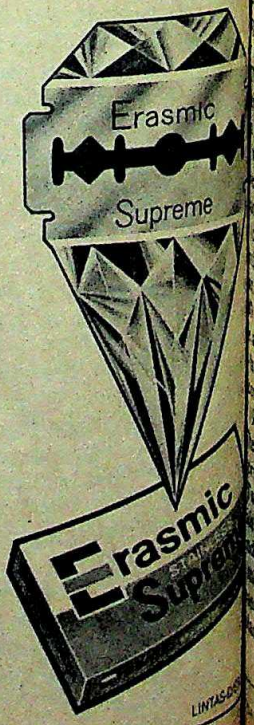
"I don't believe a visit
to the health club makes a man
exclusive.
Nor even the initials on his swim-suit.
I believe in an appearance
that's personal.
A look that says it all without
having to say a word...



But first,
a super-smooth shave
to give me the edge."



Erasmic Supreme
The blade with the diamond edge

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...ame, it was clear that the Rs 6 crore ...by the state Government as share ...had gone, literally, down the drain. ...five years of operation, the total ...of tube-wells actually working is less ...000. One thousand two hundred wells ...are lying idle because an agreement ...be reached between the corporation ...the state electricity board over the ...for laying power lines for these wells. ...lift irrigation schemes, the record is ...worse. Only 14 schemes worth Rs 80 ...have been completed during the cor...'s lifetime. Sixty-five are still in ..., some of them for years.

...parate Rates: One of the factors that ...the organisation struggle from the very ...ning was disparity in its water rates and ...for water from irrigation schemes. ...from these schemes is sold much ...to cultivators simply because the ...ment never seriously attempts to ...the cost of the projects which are

Bhadoria: lack of discipline?

...d to be loss making. On the other ...the corporation rates were usually as ...five times higher and no serious ...was made to rationalise the two ...rates.

...he rest of the problems were created ...ly in just over five years, the corpo... had 12 managing directors. Since ...when the corporation started expand... though there was insufficient work, ...a top heavy outfit with a surfeit of ...current strength: 1,500). There are ...one chief engineer, 29 superin... engineers, 20 executive engineers ...assistant engineers. And although ...are unoccupied in every department, ...have yet been framed, no internal ...conducted, and only the balance sheets ...78–79 are ready.

...Lift Irrigation Corporation has also ...ruption like few other organisations ...enty-four lift schemes have ground ...because two Indore firms supplied ...ard pumps and other accessories ...re than Rs 75 lakh. Three years ...ed, but these firms have not even ...ckisted. Also lying idle are more than half a crore rupees worth of spare parts, which have been bought without adequate reason and at exorbitant cost.

Political Appointments: In the beginning, only technical men were taken on the board of directors. But in Arjun Singh's time, six out of 11 seats were occupied by Congress(I) legislators. Bhadoria was appointed a full-time chairman in March 1981 and since his arrival discipline has deteriorated steadily.

Within three months of taking over, in the face of stiff opposition from the then managing director M.P. Heremath, Bhadoria did the unheard of: he divested the managing director's post of virtually all its powers. Backed by the legislators, Bhadoria had a board resolution passed which gave the chairman total charge of all establishment, financial and administrative matters. After that, there were several instances of officers talking back at managing directors because their power was limited to the technical side.

Unionists allege that Bhadoria rarely attended office or took interest in work, even though with his powers his responsibilities too had grown. When he did step in, it was in strange ways. Last year, Heremath charge-sheeted the chief accounts officer for his involvement in questionable purchases. Bhadoria had the action stayed on the grounds that he had not been consulted. The officer, in whose tenure balance sheets were in arrears and no internal audit had been conducted, has now secured a senior position in another government corporation.

Widespread Corruption: In another instance last year, the corporation's assistant secretary was sacked for allegedly forging his travel bills. This order was stayed reportedly by Chief Minister Arjun Singh himself. Today this officer is again facing a charge-sheet for his role in the payment of some printers' bills. In fact, so many were the allegations of irregularities, that a senior IAS official S.K. Chib was asked to make investigations which would also study the role of the chairman and managing director and the constitution of the board of directors in addition to inquiring into the allegations.

But the decision to shut the corporation is inexplicable. It was set up to get around red tapism and bureaucratic hold-ups and if its responsibility is returned to the Department of Irrigation things can hardly be expected to improve. Says a union leader: "If the Government is so dissatisfied, why doesn't it change the top bosses instead of winding up." The truth is probably that a clean-up operation would reveal unpleasant facts that the Government would prefer to stay buried.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

KARNATAKA

The Merger Muddle

WHEN S. Bangarappa walked out of the Congress (I) it was hoped that his coming would bolster the flagging opposition in the state. These hopes have been vanishing by the day as Bangarappa and the Karnataka Kranti Ranga formed by the late Devraj Urs, spent weeks squabbling over the terms of a merger.

The key point of the dispute ironically was over the words 'join' and 'merge'. Members of the Kranti Ranga initially insisted that Bangarappa's group should 'join' their party without any preconditions. Bangarappa wanted the coming together to be called a 'merger' and also wanted to decide who would get key executive posts beforehand. As both sides haggled over these points, talks broke down.

Prolonged Negotiations: As negotiations were on, public sympathy for the two groups began to wear thin. Finally, it took a high-level meeting, held over breakfast at the house of Chandraprabha Mohan, Urs's daughter, to sort out the issue. The two groups decided to merge unconditionally and authorised Bangarappa and Kranti Ranga President J.H. Patel to work out the details. The two leaders were authorised to decide on their main programmes and policies and also the crucial question of whether they should choose a new name for their party. To avoid disputes over the leadership of the party it seems likely that two posts of chairman and working president will be created.

But this agreement was no assurance that all problems were over. The Kranti Ranga is now working towards unity with the Janata Party. Bangarappa is, however, known to have mixed feelings about such a union as he feels that the Janata Party projects too much of a middle-class image. He himself belongs to a backward class and he is keen on making the neglect of this section his main election plank. As Urs was known for his efforts to improve the lot of the backward classes, Bangarappa feels more at home with the Kranti Ranga. Meanwhile the Janata Party General Secretary Ramakrishna Hegde, who has been camping in Bangalore has been holding merger talks with the Kranti Ranga and the much battered Congress (S).

Hegde said he was working towards

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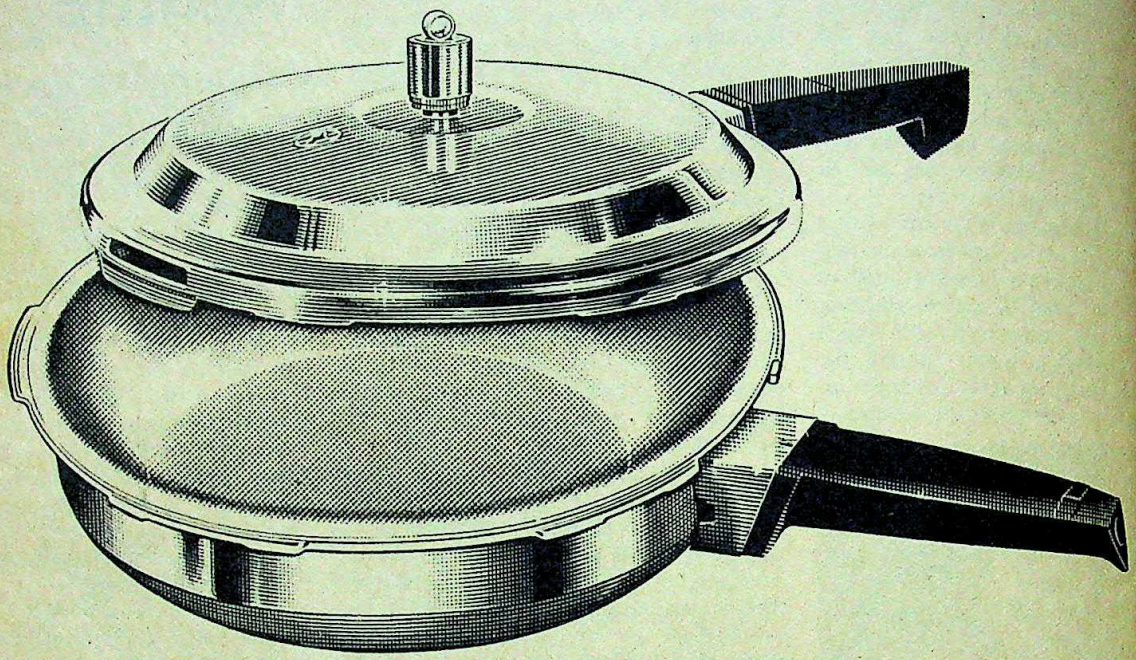
It's so versatile you'll wonder how you ever cooked without it

The Prestige Pressure Pa



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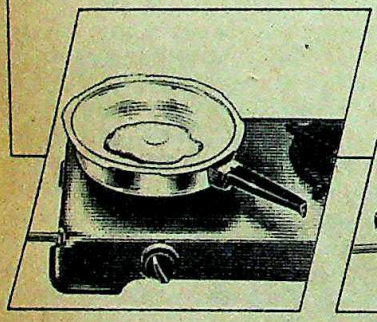
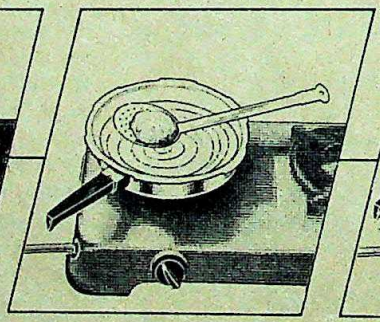
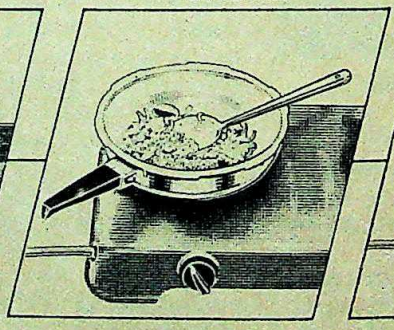


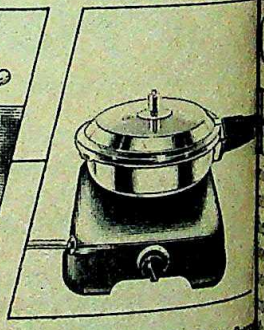
DEEP FRY



SAUTE



PRESSURE CO



You can fry and deep fry in it. Season. Saute. Simmer in it. Then cover and cook. Quick. The Prestige Pressure Pan. So versatile. So convenient and handy. It just had to be designed! To help you make all those exciting recipes your family clamours for . . . . . in a matter of minutes.

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Cover it with the Prestige lid and it cooks your dish in a jiffy. Chicken bhurta? Twenty minutes. Mutton dopiaza? Twenty five minutes. Dum aloo? Even less. Saves your time for better things. Makes your fuel last longer.

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The Pressure Pan comes from Prestige. The people who gave India its first, most widely used pressure cooker and developed the unique gasket release system to make pressure cooking absolutely safe.

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If you already own a Prestige Pressure Cooker congratulate yourself!

The Prestige Pressure Pan is yours for just the price of an ordinary heavy gauge pan. Buy just the pan—your Prestige cooker lid fits exactly over it to give you the new Prestige Pressure Pan at a better than bargain price. Because at Prestige we are working to give you better value, better products for your hard earned money.

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This is the chance to get your a real package deal. We now two marvellous kitchen aids— safest pressure cooker in India with its unique gasket release and the exciting pressure pan for little over the price of one. One lid fits both and you save over Rs. 150/-

Prestige PRESSURE PAN

A

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with these parties which will be "slimore than an electoral alliance and less than a merger". They were to fight the elections on the basis of their manifesto and symbol—a goal seems distant at the moment, with side willing to submerge its indivi-Another kink is that unity talks do include the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) the two Communist parties.

Veiled Concern: The Congress (I) is ving these developments with a mixture and veiled concern. Chief Minister Rao, who has repeatedly dismissed ngappa's exit as a non-event, said de-"If the Opposition is so weak that needed a Bangarappa to revive them I ing to send some more Congress (I) to make them strong."

Rao has troubles in his own party. ng that many of his partymen may Bangarappa, he announced in New last month that all sitting MLA's includ-Ministers would be given tickets and that expanding his cabinet to give repre-tion to the "backward classes and ities in the state."

This assurance has brought censure Karnataka MP's who have no hold over rs. Jaffer Sharieff, Union minister of for railways, immediately called a press

BANGALORE NEWS PHOTOS

Patel and Bangarappa (second and third from left): many hurdles to overcome

conference and said that Gundu Rao had no authority to decide who should get party tickets and it was for the High Command to decide. Nor is the party organisation of the state functioning smoothly. The new acting president, K. Mallanna has been engaged in a constant battle with the deposed president K.T. Rathod. This tussle is turning party meetings into fiascos. Rathod still maintains that he has been unjustly thrown out. Last week Mallanna suspended him from the party but Rathod called this "unconstitutional and illegal".

Nebulous Situation: Meanwhile with scandals galore cropping up in the state, what with the recent cement and forest deals which Rao has been named in, the party High Command is said to be having second thoughts about retaining him as chief minister. Last fortnight the party was agog with speculation that Rao was to be included in Mrs Gandhi's cabinet. and be replaced by Veerappa Moily. This it was felt would remove the main target of the Opposition attack. Right now the political situation in the state is nebulous. Admits a top Congress(I) functionary: "It's extremely confusing and with so much dust being kicked up it is difficult to predict if we will win hands down in the next elections." The main cause for concern within the party is the fact that the backward classes and minorities whom Urs nurtured during his reign have been totally neglected by Rao and are unlikely to go with the party. The linguistic minorities are upset by the way the chief minister settled the language tussle by giving primacy to Kannada. Rao is also blamed for not strengthening the party rank and file. M. Raghupathy, the Kranti Ranga leader says: "The main threat for the Congress(I) in the next elections is the Congress(I) itself."

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

ERALA

Outclassed

KERALA has a remarkable record of communal harmony, but last fortnight, what appears to be a minor, localised incident, snowballed into a national issue and threatens to blot the communal copybook. The provocation was the sacking of a young Brahmin woman teaching Arabic in a Muslim-run school in Kerala's Muslim-dominated Malappuram district. Though the veracity of exactly why Gopalika Anthrajanam, 22, was sacked vary, the sacking of the petite teacher has immediately been coloured with communal overtones.

According to the management of the Muslim Aided School (MAS), at Pandikkad, Anthrajanam was sacked because the parents of her students objected to the headmaster, P. Abdullah, about a Brahmin teaching Arabic. Abdullah alleged that pupils had complained to him about her faulty pronunciation and also claimed that attendance in her class was falling steadily. However, the fact that Anthrajanam had been teaching only for six days before she was asked to quit seems that there is more to the story than disgruntled parents. The lower primary school has a total strength of 203 of which nearly 160 are Muslims, mainly children between the ages of six and eight. Anthrajanam refused to comment, but her family claims that communal forces in the district pressurised the headmaster into asking her to quit, even though she had a four-year appointment. She, however, claims that the job held no special appeal for her, but since she had qualified as the first Brahmin woman to reach a *Munshi*'s post and the state Government offered incentives for the study of the Arabic language, she applied for the post and was selected.

Anthrajanam: victimised?

The issue immediately became a major controversy in the state. *Chandrika*, the mouthpiece of the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), denounced the incident in a series of editorials and claimed that the real reason was that Anthrajanam had rejected amorous advances made by Abdullah and he had responded by sacking her. The paper claimed that two Muslim women teachers of the MAS school had quit earlier for the same reasons.

Meanwhile, the incident has stirred up a hornet's nest in the Brahmin bastion of Tripunnithra, near Cochin, where K. Gopalakrishnan Iyer, principal of the Government Sanskrit College issued a strong statement. He said that the sacking was purely communal, "without parallel in this secular, independent country" and grimly predicted a backlash in the state's educational system. The state Government meanwhile, has been cautiously trying to defuse the tense situation. Education Minister and former student leader T.M. Jacob, 32, said: "I am sad that communalism has crept into education. We will never allow it to take roots," adding that it was the duty of the state to provide Anthrajanam with alternate employment. But the state Government is keeping the affair on a very low key, and understandably so. It fears that the Anthrajanam case could drastically alter the state's communal record.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

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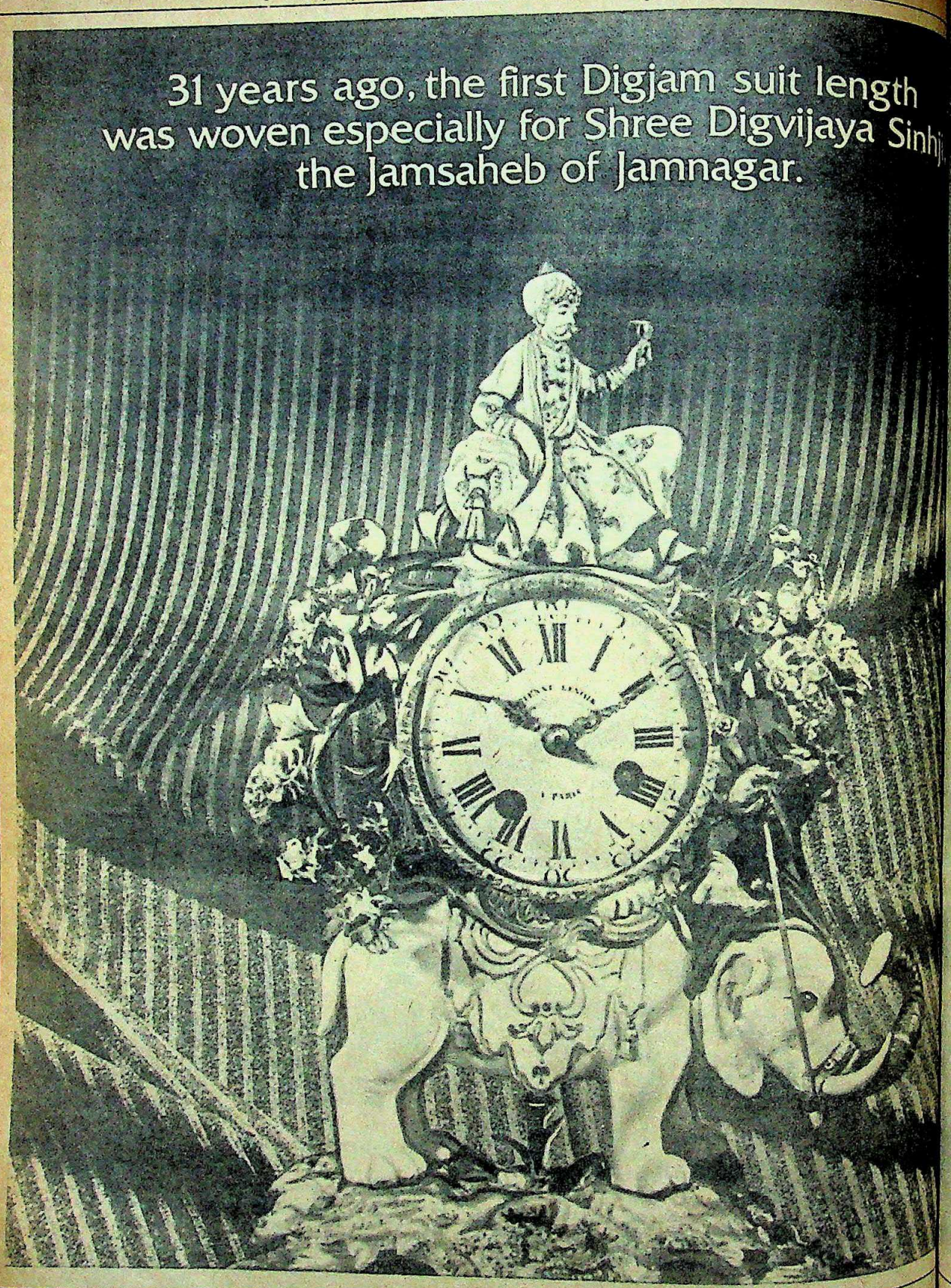

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Shree Digvijaya Woollen Mills has come a long way since then... yet, it still creates suitings especially for the connoisseur.

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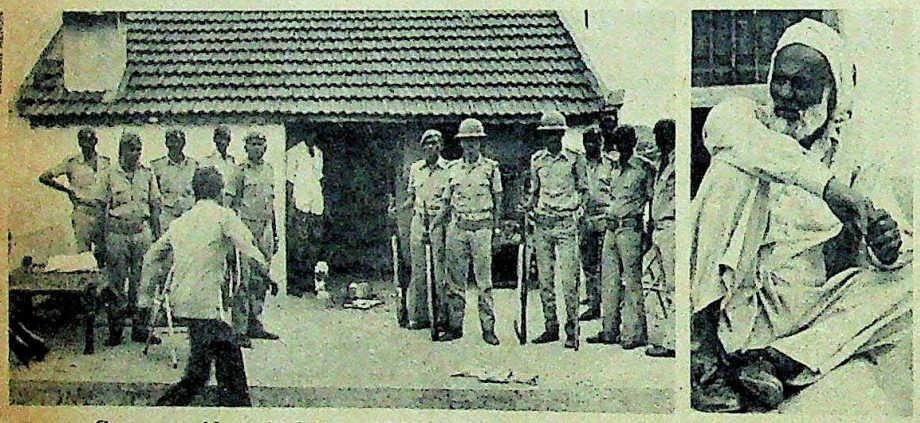
GUJARAT

The Bakhia Backlash

IT COULD prove the straw that finally breaks the camel's back. The sensational arrest last month of the Don of Daman, Sukur Naran Bakhia has triggered off an unprecedented crack-down by customs officials on Gujarat's seemingly invincible smuggling fraternity. Last fortnight, Customs Collector B.V. Kumar, 48, led a military-type combing operation in specific areas of Kutch, a major smuggling centre. The customs raid, assisted by six platoons of armed Special Reserve Police, was carried out simultaneously at 16 pre-selected points and netted a final tally of over Rs 7 lakh in contraband, currency and gold.

It was the first time that such a major, and successful, operation had been launched in the area and the effects were immediate. Elated customs officials say that smuggling activity has virtually ground to a halt in the area and other smuggling centres in the state and the preventive effect could last for some weeks yet.



RAMESH MENON

Customs raid on the house of Mohammed (right): casting their nets wide

Big Guns: The real intention, however, is to keep up the pressure and rope in those who, unfortunately, escaped the dragnet. Apart from Bakhia, the other 'Dons' operating in Gujarat, according to customs ratings, are Juma Vali Mohammed, 70, popularly known as Kutchi Mastaan, and Ratilal Navik who operates out of Dandi on the Surat coast. Both, like Bakhia, have entire villages totally loyal to them and so far customs officials have been unable to catch them red-handed. Navik, in fact, is the sarpanch of Dandi and every day orders tankers full of water to ensure that the villagers never go without.

Kumar: success

Such largesse, naturally, has bought the silence of the villagers who form not just a human wall around the 'godfathers' but also a highly efficient intelligence and early warning system of impending or planned raids. This was amply demonstrated during last fortnight's operation when both Navik and Mohammed stood by smugly while the raiding party burrowed into their belongings without finding a thing to pin on them. Mohammed, for instance, coolly sat smoking a *beedi* while the six houses he owns in Paiya village were thoroughly searched.

Officials, acting on a false tip-off, also dug up the floors of the houses without finding even a single contraband item. When questioned, Mohammed, a tall, imposing figure, told INDIA TODAY: "I have never been convicted of smuggling and no one can call me a smuggler. I am a BJP sympathiser and local Congress(I) leaders are trying to damage my reputation since I am a powerful man in Kutch. Every Muslim in Kutch does whatever I tell him."

Confession Retracted: The reference was to state Pradesh Congress Committee(I) President Dr Mahipat Mehta who has been repeatedly alleging at press conferences in Ahmedabad that Mohammed has gold worth lakhs of rupees hidden in his houses. But Mohammed's boast was hardly an idle one. Kadar Bhatti, a smuggler caught with gold worth Rs 1.40 crore had confessed during interrogation that Mohammed had given him the contraband. But when confronted with Mohammed, he hastily retracted his statement. Customs officials, [illegible] seem determined to clean up the [illegible] operations. Says Sidarth Sekhon, [illegible] director of revenue intelligence: "[illegible] determined to put an end to smuggling [illegible] the Surat coast."

If that does happen, however, the [illegible] will undoubtedly go to Kumar who has been waging a virtual one-man battle [illegible] smuggling ever since he took over [illegible] ago. His arrival shook a lethargic [illegible] customs department out of what had been a prolonged slumber. In 1979, contraband seizures in Gujarat were valued at [illegible] lakh. A year later, after Kumar's arrival, the figure had jumped to Rs 1.15 crore and more than doubled to Rs 2.90 crore in 1981. In the last seven months alone, the figure has risen a whopping Rs 6 crore, an impressive haul by any yardstick.

Active Force: A no-nonsense [illegible] Kumar has some radical methods behind his success. One of his first moves was to overhaul the entire force. He had numerous customs officials suspected of conniving with smugglers transferred out and replaced by young active recruits from other parts of the country. He then personally recruited a network of informers and activated them in the known smuggling haunts. He also offered generous cash incentives to officers. It produced results. Patrolling of the coast by high-speed launches seized from smuggling syndicates was intensified with considerable success.

The coast was not the only target. Even in the capital, Ahmedabad, have made a series of seizures, the biggest being a haul worth Rs 1.40 crore last April. Kumar, visibly exultant Kumar: "If all the collectorates had young motivated officers and modern high-powered speedboats, no smuggler would ever get away. With [illegible] in the bag only the pygmies are left to be tackled." —RAMESH MENON

DELHI

Rich Haul

CLOISTERED in their discreet, [illegible] lent cocoons, servicing an [illegible] clientele, five-star hotels have provided the perfect foil for the [illegible] business of high-class call-girls. [illegible] night, however, the arrest of Nina [illegible] plump bejewelled 40-year-old madam [illegible] ked open the cocoon to reveal what [illegible] of a flourishing five-star racket in the [illegible] Said a satisfied Deputy Commissioner [illegible] New Delhi Police R.S. Sahaye: "[illegible] mer of '82 turned out to be the [illegible] largest call-girl catches."

Since June, the Crime Branch [illegible]

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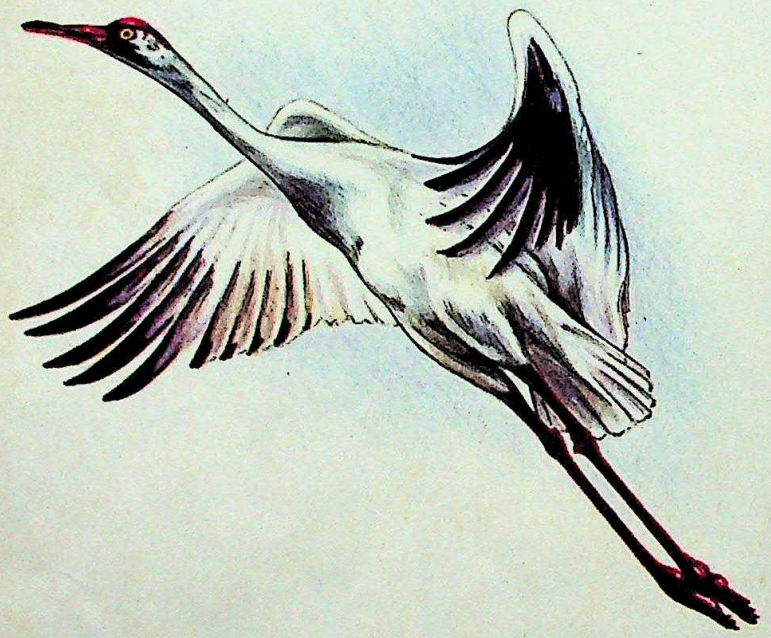
"The pace of our progress in the recent past has been more rapid than before and the future must witness an acceleration of this speed."

Shri C.H. Choksey
Chairman: in his letter to shareholders.



asian paints

Growth-rate:
No. 1 in India—No. 4 in the world!

Adroit 221

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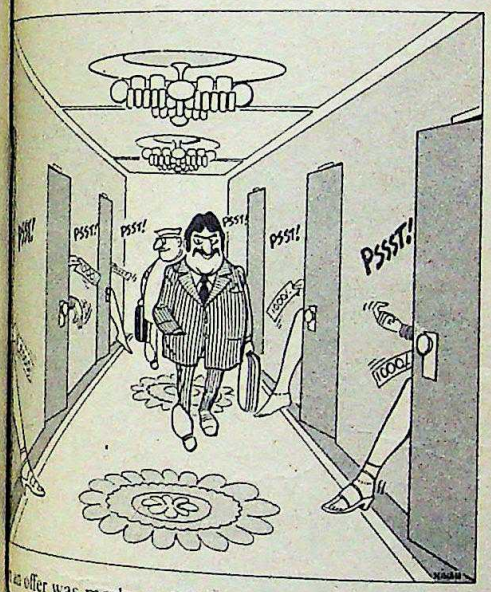
...e managed to net 16 girls operating ...tively in five-star hotels in the capital, ...ding nine from the latest raids. "It's ...a catch," says Sahaye's deputy, Inder ...poor. According to him, the five-star ...are difficult to apprehend. Indeed it is ...to pick up 40 girls in the red light ...in three raids, than it is to catch one ...in the havens of five-star hotel ...and restaurants.

...having been tipped off about Nischint's ...ing ground—the Qutab five-star com... on the outskirts of Delhi—the Crime ...detectives planted a decoy customer. ...checking into the hotel, he spotted her ...coffee shop and selected a nearby ... Feigning eagerness, the detective pick... a conversation and led her up to ...ing the possibility of arranging a girl.



...as offer was made and the deal struck ...1,000, of which Rs 400 was to be her ... The rendezvous was fixed for the same ...g at the Archna cinema, five kilom... away. And when Nischint arrived with ...26, and money changed hands, the ...Branch detectives pounced, bringing ...other call-girl ring to a close.

...Profile: Nischint, say Crime Branch ...ities, came from the Doon valley and ...her business in 1974. Branching out ...travel agency business which pro... her useful insights into the clientele of ...hotels, she gradually devoted all her ...the lucrative pastime of identifying ...mers. A divorcee herself, she was care... build up her business gradually, pick... only young girls. Neither she nor ...however, were unduly perturbed by ...rrest and admitted to their respective ...off each transaction. Jenny is alleged ...stated: "I have picked up clients ...Ashok Hotel, the Maurya Sheraton ...Taj Mahal Hotel." Raising a valid point during her interrogation, an undeterred Nischint said: "Why is it that you are after us. What about the men who pay us for their pleasure?" But so far, the selective morality of the Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act (SITA) does not provide for such action.

Police sources suggest that apart from brief liaisons, call-girls provide a range of favours for varying prices, from accompanying clients on out of town business trips to spending a night in their houses. Unless a girl has been caught red-handed, or the pimp has been nabbed while taking money, conviction becomes difficult. Now with the series of arrests, pimps and call-girls have become wary of unknown men approaching them.

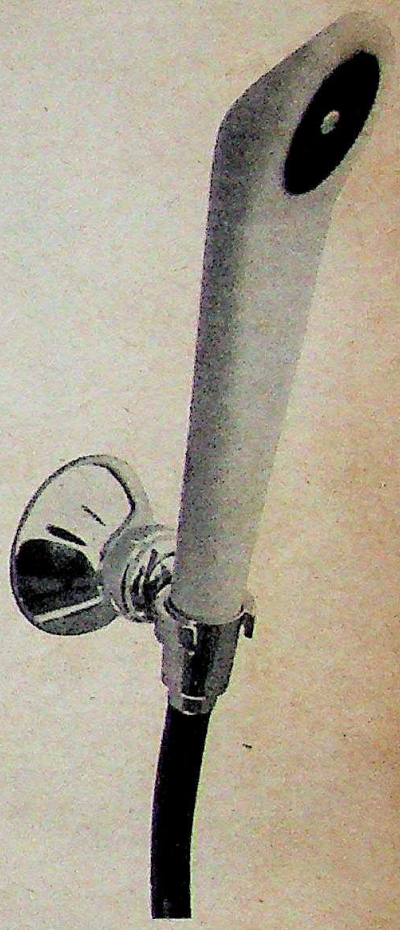
In Nischint's case last fortnight, Metropolitan Magistrate Balbir Singh insisted on "a personal surety from an affluent and respectable resident of the area she lives in." No one however turned up, and she was compelled to spend a few days in judicial lock-up. While she is now out on bail, the charge-sheet for the trial is yet to be submitted and it will be nearly a month before the summons are issued. The case will probably take a year to conclude, and that with the compliance of normally elusive witnesses.

Small Fry: However, Nischint and other such lone operators are the small fry of the trade. In the same class is the telephone girl. Her pimps could be hotel receptionists, switchboard operators and even bellboys who liaise between her and prospective clients. Often in the process, the middle men get eliminated totally, and business is contracted on the phone with known clients—an arrangement difficult to apprehend without the complicity of the Telephone Department. Police sources complain that: "We have tried repeatedly with the Telephone Department to monitor calls, but they have been uncooperative, making it difficult for us to identify such acts."

In complete contrast, the really big operators who seldom get caught, cater to a very select clientele of industrialists, politicians and senior business executives. Buffered by the nexus of power and money, their *modus operandi* guarantees confidence and completely obviates soliciting on the streets. They are the ones most responsible for giving a new lease of life to what is an increasing attraction in the five-star circuit—albeit one that doesn't appear on the glossy advertisement brochures.

—ASOKA RAINA

People and Showers



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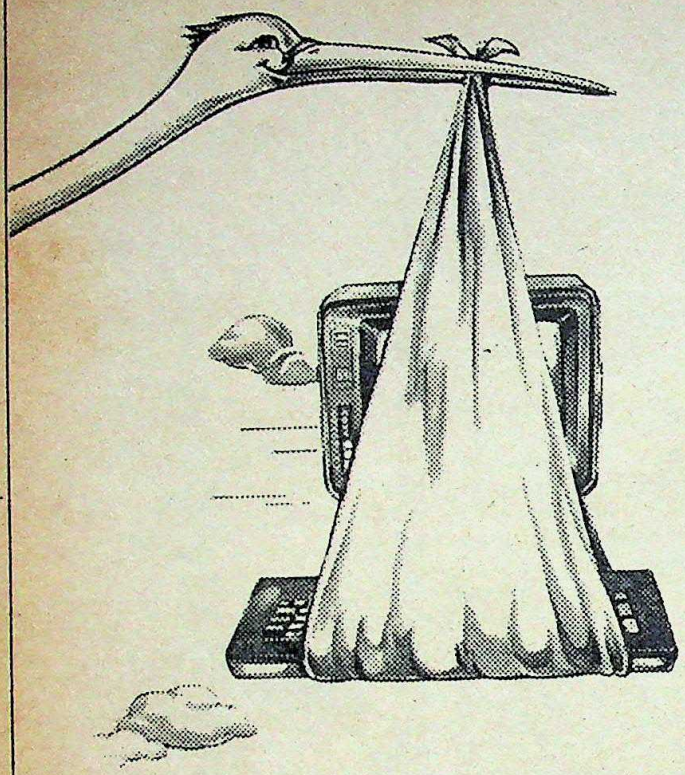

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JAMMU & KASHMIR

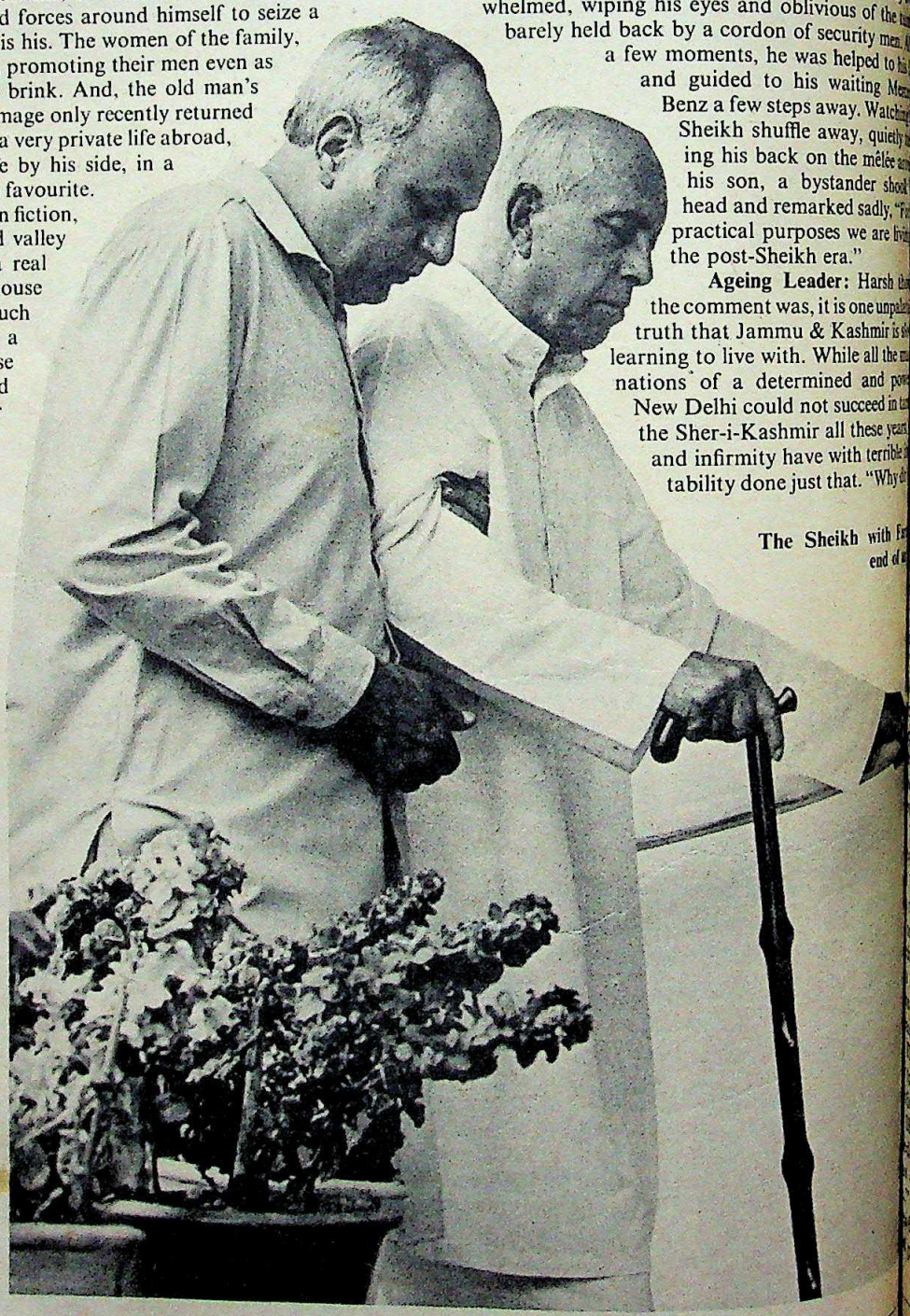
The Son Also Rises

IT HAD all the ingredients of a soppy hit from the film studios of Bombay, a hyped up good-versus-bad pot-boiler the like of dozens churned out yearly. An aged father-figure, a man of principle, courage and charisma, who fought for his ideals nearly half a century, stricken by heart disease and banished to uncertain convalescence. A calculating son-in-law of dubious intent and still more dubious talents, a veteran of the old man's struggles, gathering like-minded forces around himself to seize a legacy he is convinced by right is his. The women of the family, playing on the old man's mind, promoting their men even as they nurse him back from the brink. And, the old man's son, a man with a 'Mr Clean' image only recently returned from the cherished seclusion of a very private life abroad, an attractive foreign born wife by his side, in a moment of emotion chosen the favourite.

If truth can be stranger than fiction, so it was in the autumn misted valley of Kashmir where just such a real life drama was played to a full house in August. And, if it had a touch of the soap opera, it was also a deadly serious business whose importance reaches far beyond the snow clad ranges of the Pir Panjal mountains. For this was no ordinary family quarrel which might affect only a handful of family members. Here was Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the lion of Kashmir who has in one way or other dominated the affairs of the state for 50 years and put a firm print on India's destiny, in the waning years of his life confronting a dilemma which comes inevitably to towering men such as he: to whom should his legacy pass? In a flurry of decisions virtually forced upon him, the Sheikh last fortnight made up his mind with uncharacteristic finality: he cast aside son-in-law Ghulam Mohammad Shah, 62, and inducted into his Cabinet elder son Farooq Abdullah, 45, clinching an issue unresolved for almost 18 months.

The climax came in an annexe of Srinagar's Raj Bhavan whose windows and balconies command the finest view of the poplar fringed Dal Lake dotted with the *shikaras* and houseboats which are symbolic of the state. Inside, in a 15-minute ceremony on the morning of August 23, another s was taking shape as Farooq repeated the oath of office and se as health minister to the prompting of Governor B.K. Nehru. T his eyes brimming full with tears, he reached down to embrace his mother and then his father sitting in a low chair. The S blinked back his own tears and seemed momentarily whelmed, wiping his eyes and oblivious of the barely held back by a cordon of security men. a few moments, he was helped to his and guided to his waiting Mer Benz a few steps away. Watchi Sheikh shuffle away, quietly ing his back on the mêlée his son, a bystander shook head and remarked sadly, "F practical purposes we are liv the post-Sheikh era."

Ageing Leader: Harsh the comment was, it is one unpal truth that Jammu & Kashmir is learning to live with. While all the nations of a determined and po New Delhi could not succeed in the Sher-i-Kashmir all these years and infirmity have with terrible tability done just that. "Why



BHAWAN SINGH

The Sheikh with F end of

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...ible me?" asked the Sheikh hesitantly ...ing a brief photographic session with ...TODAY. But in a moment he broke into ...making jokes about the persistence of ...pographers. Alternating between periods ...erfect alertness and memory lapses, the ...h has, when the occasion demanded ...ered up energy enough to address ...islators, meet visiting well-wishers ...even attend the rare public function. ...meeting hours are confined to a small ...of the morning and again a short while ...evening when he sits out on his ...ured lawns to take in the ...ur.

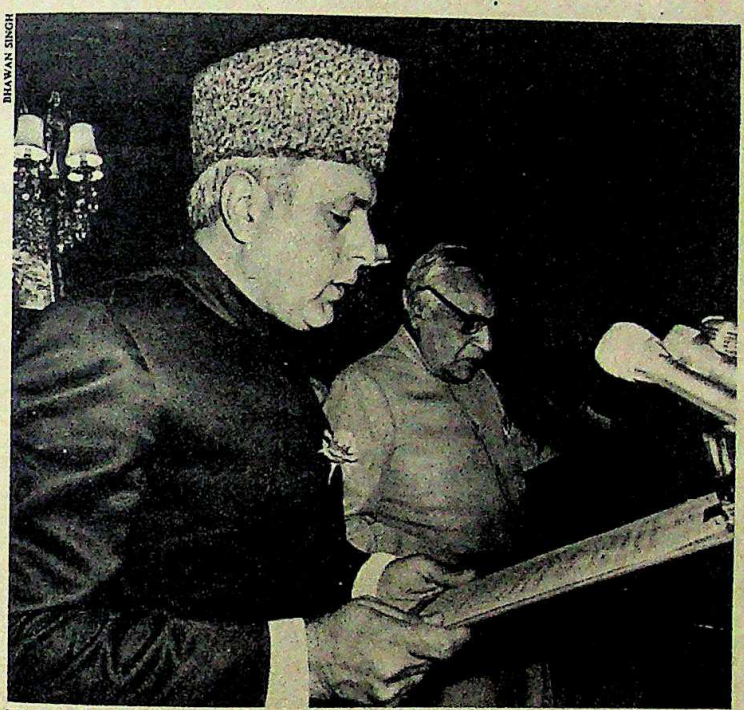
For those who have watch- ...an in his prime, it is a ...ing dénouement. "He is ...ally weak but mentally ...lert," says one politician ...meets him regularly. While ...Sheikh seems to have sur- ...any immediate danger to ...e doctors flown in from ...gaon and Delhi to attend ...after his last, the third, ...attack on June 8 uncover- ...ealth problems. They dis- ...ed to their amazement ...his persistent stomach ...s were not recurring at- ...of diarrhoea as thought ...but due to interrupted ...supply to the intestines. ...In the past, the Sheikh had ...k of proving his doctors ...and bouncing back ...cardiac problems—he has ...enlarged heart—which ...have felled lesser men. In ...stormed his way to un- ...ible power in the assembly elections ...a sick bed, recovering from a heart ...In spite of doctors' prognosis, he ...ned to a virtually normal life, throwing ...f into the state's politics with the ...of a man half his age.

That was five years ago. Now his age—...his own reckoning, though others put ...it—is working against him. Coupled ...other ailments such as diabetes—he had ...cent attack just days before he was ...ded to visit Jaslok Hospital in Bombay ...kidney check-up—the Sheikh's latest ...probably counts him out of any but ...ve, symbolic role in the future.

...etable Changed: Nobody was qui- ...to realise that than the intimate group ...icians and bureaucrats that surround ...Sheikh, led understandably by his ...ate family members. "The Sheikh's ...ranged them to advance their time- ...said a journalist referring to the ...ghout ambiguous but obviously orches- ...plan for a post-Sheikh leader that has been unfolding slowly over the months. In fact, it also swiftly sharpened the contradictions which have plagued the Sheikh's family, bringing the simmering feud between Shah and Farooq bursting into the open. "We were expecting it at any moment; it should have happened earlier," said Congress(I) MLA from Jammu Cantonment Parduman Singh.

Talk of succession has been in the air ever since January 23, 1981 when the Sheikh unexpectedly asked the congregation at the Hazratbal shrine to endorse his son Farooq, till then almost totally innocent of any political experience, as president of the National Conference (NC). His son's inexperience does not seem to have deterred the Sheikh, perhaps because a similar anointing was taking place in Delhi where just as inexperienced a son, Rajiv, was being inducted to help an even more important national leader, Mrs Indira Gandhi. Certainly, the Sheikh has used language similar to Mrs Gandhi's to justify his choice: decrying talk of dynastic rule in an interview just before his illness, the Sheikh said Farooq would be starting with an advantage but would have to prove himself in the democratic process.

Farooq's Hazratbal nomination was greeted with thunderous applause, but one man who did not join in the cheering was son-in-law Shah, who kept up a sullen silence for three long months before he reluctantly fell into line. Even then the acknowledgement was grudging. At a public meeting on April 30 in Iqbal Park in Srinagar, he reiterated an old theme that: "People over 60 should retire. We have told you that Farooq is your leader and you should follow him." The formal anointing took place on August 21 last year when Srinagar's streets were trampled by a mammoth crowd of half-a-million from all over the state. "Kashmir has never seen such a huge rally," said Mahboob Beg, son of Mirza Afzal Beg who was once the Sheikh's nominated successor before the two fell out in 1978.


BHAWAN SINGH

Farooq being sworn in by Governor Nehru: emotion-charged atmosphere

Rumoured Split: The crowds don't seem to have impressed Shah who apparently had no intention of following his own advice on the subject of retirement. Indeed, after the Sheikh's illness, so rampant were rumours of a split in the family that at the end of June, Farooq was obliged to issue an official note saying that reports suggesting "that the National Conference is the victim of intra-party rivalry and that my brother-in-law Kh. Ghulam Mohammad Shah and myself are antagonist to each other" were "baseless and tendentious".

The facade could hardly survive. Within days of the statement, Shah urged the executive of the NC, against Farooq's will, to leave it to the legislature party to decide which Presidential candidate to support—Giani Zail Singh or Justice H.R. Khanna. It took a fiat from the Sheikh to align legislators alongside the Giani, where Farooq wanted them.

At around this time, Shah seems to have decided that things were hotting up. So in the next few weeks he and his supporters, mainly led by Forest Minister G.N. Kochak; began to mobilise support in the NC legislature party. A counter campaign was started on behalf of Farooq led mainly by Finance Minister D.D. Thakur, a minister who had long been at odds with Shah. "We found not only that we had the support of the majority," said Thakur, "but we found that we had an overwhelming majority."

Exercising Restraint: Word of the rival mobilisation reached the Sheikh's ear and he decided to take a hand in putting a stop to it. Convening a legislature party meeting on August 7 the Sheikh opted for absolute neutrality calling both Shah and Farooq his eyes. There was, in fact, more to this statement than plain neutrality. For under the circumstances it meant the Sheikh was sliding back from Farooq who was widely expected to be inducted as a minister without portfolio to help his ailing father. The idea,

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INTERVIEW

'I'd Like People To Love Me'

DR FAROOQ Abdullah, gently easing himself into the void left by his father's illness, is moving with characteristic humility. He deprecates talk of 'succession' and declines to acknowledge that next to his father he will undoubtedly be the first among equals. Towering well above six feet, his large frame draped with the ever-present shalwar kameez *or black* achkan *and astrakhan cap, size 12 peshawari chappals on his feet, Farooq is no longer finding the transition from private to public life difficult. He has stopped consuming alcoholic drinks but remains addicted to golf. Nor does he have any regrets about his change of careers. "I miss only one thing, and that is my private life," he says.*

Born in October 1937, Farooq joined Jaipur Medical College in 1955 and graduated with an MBBS in 1961. As a young lad, he had seen his father arrested in 1953 but his first experience of political events was the theft of the Holy Relic in 1963 and again when he accompanied the Sheikh to Pakistan in 1964. Shortly after that he emigrated to Britain, practised medicine, and married Mollie, a nursing assistant, in 1968. They have three daughters and one son. Taking up British nationality, Farooq and his family returned in 1976 when he reverted to Indian citizenship and took over as honorary director of the Sher-i-Kashmir National Medical Institute Trust in Srinagar.

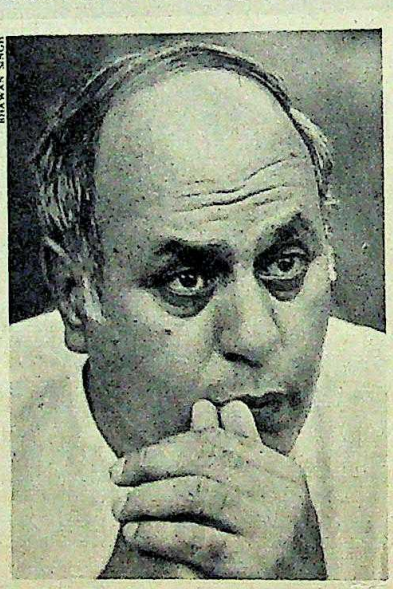
Farooq was elected unopposed as MP *on an* NC *ticket in 1980 and became president of the National Conference in 1981. The only office vacant for him in the Srinagar secretariat was that of his brother-in-law Ghulam Mohammad Shah, who resigned as power and works minister a few days earlier, clearing the way for Farooq's induction into the Cabinet. On three different occasions, Farooq took time off to talk to Managing Editor* SUMAN DUBEY *and Correspondent* GHULAM NABI KHAYAL *about last fortnight's events, the politics of the state and its ties with the Centre. Excerpts:*

Q. Many people treat G.M. Shah's resignation as a parting of ways.

A. I don't believe there's ever a parting of ways. Shah Saheb is a member of the National Conference. He only resigned as a member of the Government, that's all. He is a very active member of the party and also of the working committee, our party's highest body.

Q. The organisation of your party has been in Shah's hands. What will happen to it now?

A. Who told you? You are misinformed. National Conference is not in anybody's hands. It has one leader and that is Sheikh Abdullah. Just as Indira Gandhi is leader of the Congress Party. You can't tell me that somebody else is the one who is calling the shots. Here too, the same thing. Sheikh Abdullah is the leader. He has been the leader and as long as he's alive, he'll remain the leader. After the Sheikh, our people (will) choose the next leader democratically. Like they decided after Nehru, they'll decide after Indira Gandhi.



BHAWAN SINGH

Farooq Abdullah: "If I am not corrupt others will be afraid to be corrupt"

Q. After Nehru there was uncertainty for about five years.

A. We will not have that much of uncertainty here. We can't afford it.

Q. Are there going to be any changes in the Government? You must have discussed things with your father.

A. You don't know my father; he is a very different person. You'd be surprised that I didn't know I was going to be a minister till two days before I was sworn in. My father had called me in and said, "I never wanted it to happen this way, but my Cabinet colleagues (they were sitting there) have repeatedly pushed it on me that we need you to come and help. I couldn't turn down their repeated requests any more. Therefore, you are coming in."

Q. What will you be doing? Now that he is not so well, will you be handling the portfolios that he is handling?

A. If you are asking me whether or not I'm going to be the de facto chief minister, the answer is: I don't know. My father is actively working.

Q. Your father has been unwell lately. Did his illness precipitate Shah's resignation or your induction into the Cabinet?

A. I think it just brought it forward. Anyway I was planning to contest for the state assembly next year. I had made up my mind to leave Parliament.

Q. How are your relations with Mrs Gandhi, Rajiv and ministers at the Centre?

A. Very good. I don't see there'll be any reason why these relations should be strained. We cannot live in isolation; we cannot live without the Centre's help.

Q. You and your father have both spoken of what is common between the National Conference and the Congress(I). There's been talk of merger and so on. How do you look at all this?

A. As elections draw nearer, there are prospects of more talks being held on the future. If there's ever going to be an understanding, it must be worked out.

Q. Do you have the Centre's blessings on your entering the Cabinet here?

A. I feel you should have the blessings of the people you represent. The Centre can pick you up and throw you out any time, but it's my people that matter. Having a base with my people comes first, and good relations with the Centre next. Rapport with the Centre helps you in getting things done for the betterment of the state. I believe I have good relations with my people and I have good relations with the Centre too.

Q. Do you see the need for Article 370?

A. For the present, yes. We need it as long as communalism exists in India. I hate communalism. I'm a Muslim, but not a fanatic Muslim. I hate people who are fanatic, be they Hindu or Muslim. What I see is that we are unable to control fanatical forces in India. We seem to be losing grip.

Q. If communal harmony is important, there must be no confrontation between the National Conference and the Congress(I).

A. I would never want confrontation. I believe more in conciliation than confrontation. But if somebody is going to thrust a knife into you, will you do something to protect yourself or not?

Q. Corruption in high places tends to go unpunished and this leads to demoralisation at the lower levels.

A. People talk about a lot of this

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...ch don't have a base. However, I ...ll campaign against the corrupt. They ...n't be given out tickets in the next ...ection.

Q. Do you know Mrs Gandhi is ...tching the situation here very closely?

A. I'm glad if she's watching. If we ...ke any mistakes, I'm sure she'll tell ...e. "Look Farooq, try and straighten it ...re."

Q. But she'll keep her options open.

A. She's most welcome to.

Q. Your father has been very critical ...her.

A. My father has seen her grow. He's ...rly like Jawaharlal Nehru to her and ...u can say things to her. I'm far junior.

Q. Do you think she is well advised on ...shmir?

A. I don't know and I don't want to ...mment. It is for her to know whether ...ey are advising her rightly or not.

Q. Your father had said last year that ...e would be quitting as chief minister at the ...xt election.

I am not tough as many people would like to see me. I'm very soft and placid. I'd like to remain open, yet tough where it is necessary.

A. He's still well. I don't see why he ...ould quit. By the grace of God, we need ...m for many years to come.

Q. Are there still moves for recon...iliation with your brother-in-law?

A. Why not? One must keep trying ...r it. Look at Pakistan. How many times ...e fought with them? Aren't we trying ...r friendship with them? Fights solve ...thing. But we've never fought anyway. ...e's been saying for a year: "Please, I ...nt to go." This time he just put his foot ...wn and said, "No, I want to go."

Q. One hears a great deal about ...crease in political corruption here in the ...st few years.

A. There is no way that the National ...nference will promote corruption. We ...ve a cell in the party to look into this. If ...y corruption charges are proved agai...st anybody, no mandate will be given to ...m from the party. When I refuse tickets ...the corrupt in the next election, I will ...ve in front of them a charge-sheet. It is ...t to become unpopular in the party ...n to shield the corrupt. There is no such thing that cannot be cured. We will cure it.

Q. Isn't the personal example the best. If people at the top refrain from corruption, all will be well.

A. Yes, if I am not corrupt others will be afraid to be corrupt.

Q. But one hears funds are being collected for your party and for the various trusts and so on?

A. Funds for the party will not be collected on the understanding that I'm going to give you something as a favour in return.

Q. But that's how the nexus has been established.

A. We will never do that. I will never collect funds for the party on the understanding that I will give something in return. There's no use, then we'd better pack up and go. Everybody needs money, we must take money. But there are better and cleaner methods of taking money from people who are very rich.

Q. People will watch you because they are looking towards a post-Sheikh era. One hears mixed things about your first year as president of your party.

A. I cannot change my nature. I am not tough as many people would like to see me. I'm very soft and placid. I'd like to remain open, yet tough where it is necessary. But I would like to really give my best so that when I'm gone they'll have only one word to say: "He was good." I'd just like to work for the good of the people. I don't care for many things. I may never become one of those ministers who people fear. I'd like people to love me, not detest me.

Q. You must also be ready for them to dislike you.

A. Those I have to face. To save a patient, a doctor has to give a medicine which he'll never like because it's bitter. But that bitter medicine saves him. When you have to save people's health you have to give them bitter medicines and try to coat them with sugar so that they are palatable. That's what I'm trying. I'll make it as palatable as possible.

Q. Everyone sees your induction into the Cabinet as succession.

A. They always see it as such. Tomorrow if Rajiv enters the Government as a minister, they'll say it's succession.

Q. Wouldn't be wrong, would it?

A. No. But I hope Rajiv does come in. I'd be very glad if he does. I hope he comes as president of the Congress(I). I would like to see modern people come in with modern outlooks. There've been too many stale men running the show these past few years!

strangely enough, was suggested by Mrs Gandhi who visited the Sheikh at the end of June, but according to sources both his wife, the Begum and his daughter, Khalida, Shah's wife, who kept vigil at the Sheikh's bedside day and night, had prevailed upon him not to go ahead lest it split the family.

THE SHEIKH's statement was seen as something of a victory for the Shah camp. Farooq got a chance to get his own back at a meeting in the NC's headquarters on August 9, the 29th anniversary of the Sheikh's deposition in 1953, when he struck out at corrupt ministers, saying they would be denied party tickets, and told party men not to extol individual leaders. Then, in Shah's presence, he said they should not raise slogans like 'Gul Shah Padshah' (Shah is King).

Shah obviously decided enough was enough, and events, increasingly melodramatic, snowballed after that:

► With Independence Day round the corner, protocol dictated that D.D. Thakur take the salute, officiating for the Sheikh. Shah demurred, suggesting that Thakur take the salute in Jammu while he did so in Srinagar.

► When that idea was vetoed, a suggestion was made to downgrade the ceremony by asking the divisional commissioner to take the salute. This raised eyebrows in the press, the administration and the army and was hastily dropped.

► On August 14, the Sheikh, who came to know of the problem, decided that Thakur would take the salute.

► Shah retaliated by organising a three-day camp at Ganderbal some 30 km away and sent invitations to all ministers to lunch on August 15, an event cleverly timed to keep them away from the parade. Unfortunately for him, he made the mistake of sending the Sheikh and the Begum invitations as well. The Begum attended, but the Sheikh immediately saw the obvious furore that the absence of ministers would create outside the state.

► On the evening of August 14, the Sheikh sent urgent messages to all his ministers ordering them to be present at the parade ground the next morning at 9.00 a.m., asking them to confirm on the wireless sets of their police escorts whether or not they would attend. According to sources, some ministers could be contacted only as late as 3.00 a.m. on August 15. All ministers attended the Independence Day celebrations except for Shah, who had ordered the wireless set switched off and had gone to Ganderbal as planned. Shah also absented himself from the governor's 'At Home' that evening.

► Shah followed this up by absenting himself from a Cabinet meeting convened by the Sheikh on August 16 and 17. Under pressure from his wife and daughter, the

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Sheikh stayed his hand a while. But on August 17, his patience ran out. He despatched four ministers of the Cabinet to Shah—whose garden adjoins the Sheikh's and is separated in this season by a row of trees bearing ripe fruit—to ask him to mend his ways or quit.

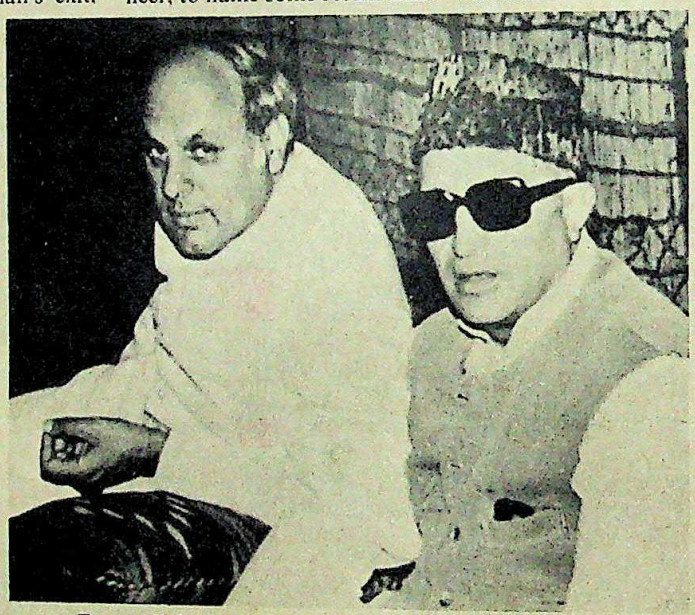
► Shah's response was one of open defiance. He told the ministers that if the Sheikh wanted to induct Farooq into the Cabinet he should first ask the legislature party. And, he handed over his resignation. The Sheikh who by now had had enough, lost little time in forwarding it to Governor B.K. Nehru for immediate acceptance.

Inconsequential: Two days later, on August 19, the Sheikh summoned another meeting of legislators and senior party functionaries and told them that Shah's exit, however unpleasant, would make no difference to the party. He said it was a "clash of temperaments", and put it down to Shah's strong-headedness and unwillingness to compromise. Shah declined to meet the press, and kept his counsel to himself. Even his staunch supporters have been keeping to themselves even though earlier reports that they would be dropped turned out to be untrue.

But Shah, according to political sources, made the fatal mistake of pushing the Sheikh too far. "The Sheikh may take a long time to decide things, but once he's pushed he acts like a lion," said one political associate. Three times earlier Shah had resigned his post—first as secretary-general of the Plebiscite Front in 1972—and three times he was persuaded by the family to pull back. While doubting the wisdom of putting responsibility in Farooq's untried hands, Shah had also gambled that with an election due no later than June next year, the Sheikh would not risk party loyalties and cohesion at this moment. Efforts at reconciliation continue, but even if they succeed Shah will return to favour suitably humbled.

Nobody is surprised that the Sheikh should have chosen Farooq in preference to Shah. The two men could hardly be more different. Shah is hot-headed, stubborn and arrogant, a man consumed by the virtues of his own ideas and principles, guided by an unrelenting sense of his own self-importance. "His background led him to feel that he was indispensable to the Sheikh. He was obsessed by the idea that he should be acknowledged the chief minister of the state," says a political rival. "He is a man of religion, a man of principle who will not compromise where he sees it not in the interest of his people," counters a political supporter. In some ways Shah is a fundamentalist though he disapproves of the fanatical fundamentalism of some Arab countries. Says he: "I have made a comparative study of the religions and I don't find any difference."

Leaden Image: On balance, Shah has a leaden public image. He speaks with a fervour and impatience that seldom endear him to individuals, though he has the capacity to move crowds. Short and stocky, his eyes perpetually hidden behind heavily tinted glasses, Shah's tantrums are legendary. He has physically manhandled people—a school teacher here, a bus conductor there, a junior police official or an executive engineer, to name some recent cases—situations which were saved only by the Sheikh's personal intervention. In an interview last year, Shah confessed that his temper often got the better of him. "Let me be truthful, this is my biggest weakness, this has made me controversial," he said.



Farooq (left) and G.M. Shah: a clash of temperaments

Much to his detriment, controversy has given him the image of an unpleasant person, somebody who cannot command public following, mass appeal and the popular vote. Nor is he much trusted in the Hindu-dominated region of Jammu. Essentially, he is an organisation man, and has spent his energies honing the NC according to his lights, raising funds for the party and building a base in the legislature party. Even his critics say he has been an effective minister, though some officials clarify that Shah's administrative methods are ruthless, that he rules with a heavy hand, is intolerant of disagreement and is generally kept at a distance by one and all.

Quite the opposite Farooq is a[n] open-minded, charming and friendly, [he] yet to take himself seriously as a politici[an] doctor by profession he has such diver[se] interests as ghazal singing, at which h[e] good, and golf. "I'll try and play golf [a] day to keep alive," he said on his [way] attend office on his second day as [chief] minister.

Imposing Figure: A novice at [public] speaking, he nevertheless comes across [with] conviction, having only recently [started] speaking at meetings in Kashmiri and [Urdu]. Tall and aristocratic in bearing, he [cuts] imposing figure who may well come to [resent] the presence of his father. "He even [looks] like Sheikh Abdullah," suggests [one] functionary. Certainly, Farooq comm[ands] a secular image second [only] that of his father.

Farooq finds it [easy] make friends and influ[ence] people. But even his most [ardent] supporters say it will [take a] long time before he makes [the] grade as a politician. His [openness], likeability and fresh[ness] assets when it comes to per[sonal] relations, may be obstacles [in] decisive, calculated and [shrewd] political decision-making. [Experience] is a good school, [but] the fee is very, very heavy," [says] Thakur Baldev Singh, pres[ident] of the state Bharatiya [Janata] Party and MLA from Hira[nagar].

Indeed, some of Far[ooq's] initial forays have been [rather] what less than successful. [He] is quick to react with emo[tion] as he did during the income [tax] raids last year on some [of] NC's ardent supporters. [But] his first year as NC president sparkled [with] achievement. His supporters say this is [due] to Shah's interference in the party [which] reduced Farooq to a *"darkhast* sident"—simply forwarding petitions [to] Government. His critics counter, [however] that though Farooq has built bridges [to] youth of the state and has a good [image] outside of the Muslim majority regions [of] valley, he lacks understanding of [the] trative problems and how to govern.

Flexible Approach: It is also [true] that Farooq would be far more acceptable [in] New Delhi than Shah could ever hope [to] Farooq is seen to be a new, [more] personality, flexible in his approach [to] state's problems with the Centre; Shah [in] contrast viewed as a hardliner who has [not] taken the Sheikh's rigid interpretation [of] autonomy one unacceptable step [from] Shah, a veteran of the days when the

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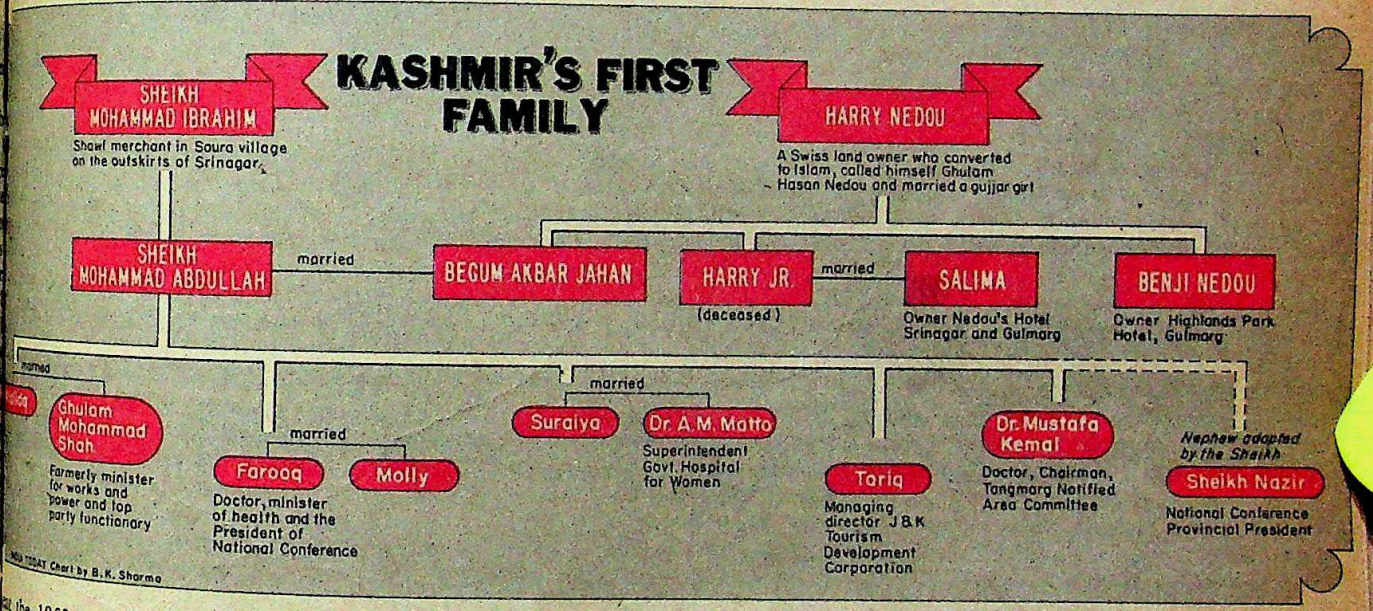
favour of plebiscite to determine the future, undoubtedly failed to endear to New Delhi last June after the fell ill when he spoke about the versial Resettlement Bill enacted by State Assembly to permit genuine state ects settled in Pakistan to return to their ral homes and lands (INDIA TODAY, 15, 1982).

Speaking at Baramulla at the western of the Kashmir valley, Shah said that if ernor Nehru did not give his assent to 52—which he still has not—"he should ". Then, the man who by his own ning spent "eight-and-a-half years in and three-and-a-half in exile" from the of his first arrest in 1946, went on to talk limited accession", warning of a "con- " being hatched in New Delhi to

Unique State: Farooq is obviously intent on disarming the two-year-old confrontation that has churned up emotions in the state and New Delhi in an unpredictable stop-go fashion ever since Mrs Gandhi returned to power in 1980. With good reason too, for as former Congress chief minister Mir Qasim says: "After the Sheikh no chief minister will be able to deliver the goods without the help of the Centre." The reasons are obvious: Jammu & Kashmir is no ordinary state, and its importance is easily belied by its sparse population (5.98 million in the 1981 census) and its undeveloped resources. Its accession to India is questioned by Pakistan, its territory acrimoniously divided, its emotional integration with the rest of the country remains less than desirable, and it reverberates with parochial

New Delhi's emissaries have begun to fly into the valley to independently assess the implications of the rift in the party. Qasim, who had differences with his party high command as long as it stood for confrontation with the Sheikh, has emerged from his seclusion in anticipation of a possible role in the post-Sheikh era. "I want you to have the clear impression that I am not retiring from politics nor going out of the national party or into a regional party," he said last fortnight.

Electoral Understanding: The Congress(I)'s dilemma is, of course, that in the last election the NC virtually snuffed it out. It is a party which has yet to prove its influence in the Kashmir valley or unite behind a single, local leader. The party claims to have been working at the grass roots for support, but NC spokesmen contemptuously dismiss its



the 1953 coup which deposed the h and replaced him with Bakshi am Mohammed's administration. Farooq, in contrast, has built bridges New Delhi. He was at the forefront of ourners who brought Sanjay Gandhi's to immerse in the Jhelum. Just as the had close ties with Nehru and Mrs Farooq is a regular visitor to 1, ung Road and a confessed admirer of Gandhi (*see interview*). He declines to the Resettlement Bill, the latest in- to raise tempers in Srinagar and New as if it were best left undisturbed, and of the need for good relations between ture and the state. Last month he told supporters that he stood for cooper- with the Centre as long as it did not in the way of the Kashmiri people's s and aspirations. Indeed, one of reservations about Farooq is that he too soft in Centre-state questions, to e's detriment.

problems of community, language and region that seem to be barely under control.

Small wonder, then, that New Delhi keeps a baleful look-out for signs of trouble. Sometimes the view from the corridors of South Block has been myopic, heightening the ever-present confrontation, at other times clear sighted such as it is now when the Centre is leaving the NC alone to come to terms with itself. The Congress(I), normally ever watchful for an opportunity to lash out at the Sheikh or his party, has been subdued in recent months following an apparent decision in New Delhi not to rock the boat in the Sheikh's sunset years. The party, for example, was conspicuous by its absence in the chorus of political protest that greeted the Resettlement Bill. And Mrs Gandhi's visit to the ailing Sheikh seems to have put the seal on her new watch-and-wait stance.

The Congress(I) is obviously gambling on an erosion of NC popularity after the Sheikh. The pawns are already on the move:

claims as pretentious. Yet, there is a large section in the party which speaks of a restoration of the understanding that existed between NC and the Congress(I) in 1975 before the latter—to its cost—withdrew support in the 1977 elections.

Elections are around the corner, no later than June 1983, though there is already speculation that the Sheikh, depending on his health, may advance them in order to help consolidate Farooq's position under his personal tutelage. Whenever they come, neither the Congress(I) nor the NC disclaims the possibility of an electoral understanding between them. Says Thakur: "It can't be ruled out," while another party functionary clarifies that Shah's ouster has paved the way for such an undestanding.

On the Congress(I) side, both Qasim and the President of the party's state unit, Mufti Saeed, use precisely those words though they hasten to add that it is early days for even initial moves in that direction. The

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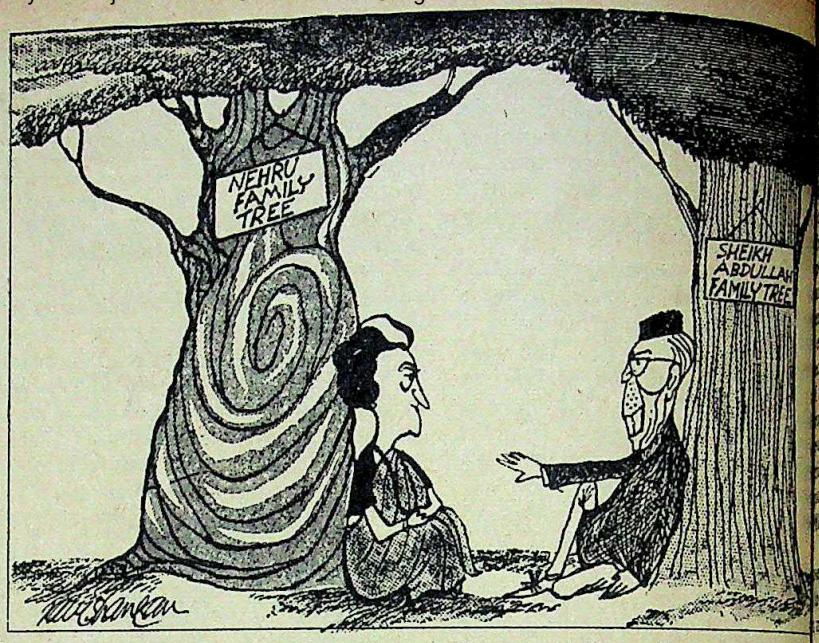
party knows it holds some trumps to be used in the post-Sheikh era. Says Janata Party General Secretary Dharam Das, "Indira Gandhi will use one faction against the other just as she did when she split the Janata Party in 1979."

Ultimately, Farooq knows that his only salvation lies in the ballot-box, that the vacuum after the Sheikh will be filled either by a government that does the bidding of the Centre, whatever its party composition, or has a large enough popular mandate to chart its own course. The state's demographic pattern gives the odds to any party which wins the Muslim-dominated constituencies—42 in a house of 76—but it also means the party has to win all of them or break into the Hindu dominated constituencies south of the Banihal Pass.

Corruption Talk: Neither is a foregone conclusion for the NC's image has taken a knock in the last few years. The Sheikh's charisma and sentiment may carry the day, but there is no corner where talk of corruption and administrative irregularities does not ring loud. Some of it is possibly exaggerated, but there is enough of substance to lend it credible dimensions. And some of the mud flung at the Sheikh and his family is also sticking with embarrassing tenacity (INDIA TODAY, April 15, 1982).

The Government and the NC are a law unto themselves in such potentially lucrative decisions as the allotment of land. Shops, cinemas and residential plots are allegedly awarded with impunity to party sympathisers, the privileged and to relatives of those in high position. Some of the more notorious examples:

► The Government awarded four kanals (half-acre) of prime land on the bank of the Jhelum to the NC's Nawa-i-Subh trust (main activity at present: an Urdu party daily and an English weekly) to put up a five-storeyed building currently estimated to cost Rs 1 crore. The catch: an annual rental of one rupee a kanal for a 90-year lease. Earlier this year the High Court stayed construction following a writ filed by a journalist but the trust, headed by Shah, calmly ignored the order and has continued to build.



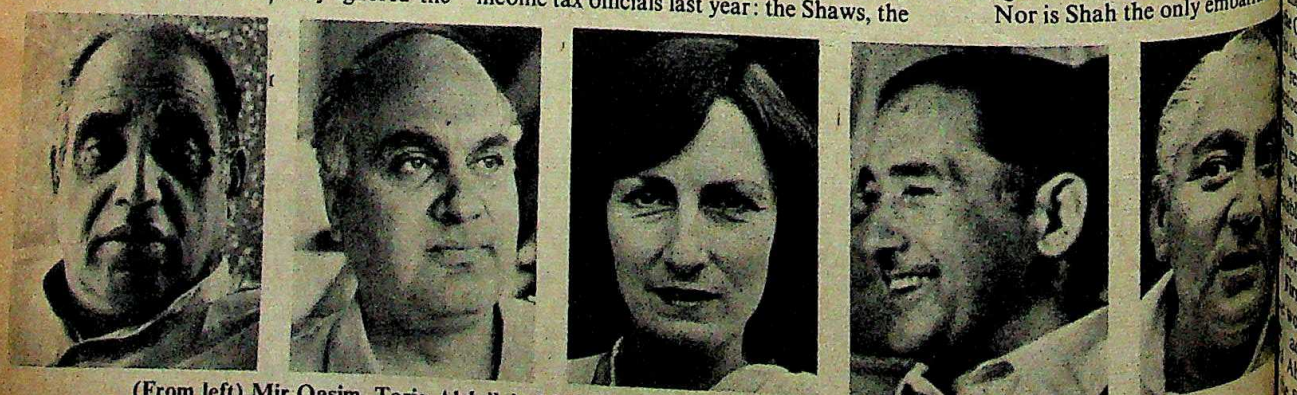
"The woods are lovely, dark and deep...."

► There is scarcely a minister who has not built at least one palatial home in Srinagar or Jammu during his tenure. "Some of them are wealthy in their own right," explained Farooq, refraining from discussing those who aren't. Ministers naturally prefer choice sites in the preferred localities of the two capitals. One minister of state happened to be too late to be allotted land in Rawalpara, a south Srinagar government housing estate. He made up for it by taking possession—on Martyrs' Day six weeks ago—of two plots carved out of land reserved for the estate's bus terminus.

► A property called Hari Nivas, located on 90 acres of prime land on the shore of Dal Lake, formerly property of the Maharaja's son, Karan Singh, and given over by him to the state Government for socially desirable purposes, was handed to a consortium of seven business families to build a 300-room luxury hotel. Among the partners are some staunch NC supporters who were raided by income tax officials last year: the Shaws, the Mattos, the Khanyaris and the Saw

These are the names of some of the families who have benefited from the usually high degree of discretion the Government has awarded itself in the of licensing facilities and amenities income tax raids were a shot acr Sheikh's bow, delivered at a time w confrontation between him and Mrs was at its height. They reminded in spite of the fact that the state enj unusual degree of autonomy un Indian Constitution, the Centre sti long reach. In fact, more than one ye the tax raids have resulted in no p tions, no cases of infringement, co initial impressions that they may hav political motive. They have certai dampened the obvious prosperity —s ly evident in the city's commercial h the main dozen or so business famili make up the state's leading entrep and happen to be associated with through its various trusts and activi

Nor is Shah the only embarra



(From left) Mir Qasim, Tariq Abdullah, Mollie Abdullah, G.N. Kochak, and D.D. Thakur: dramatis personae

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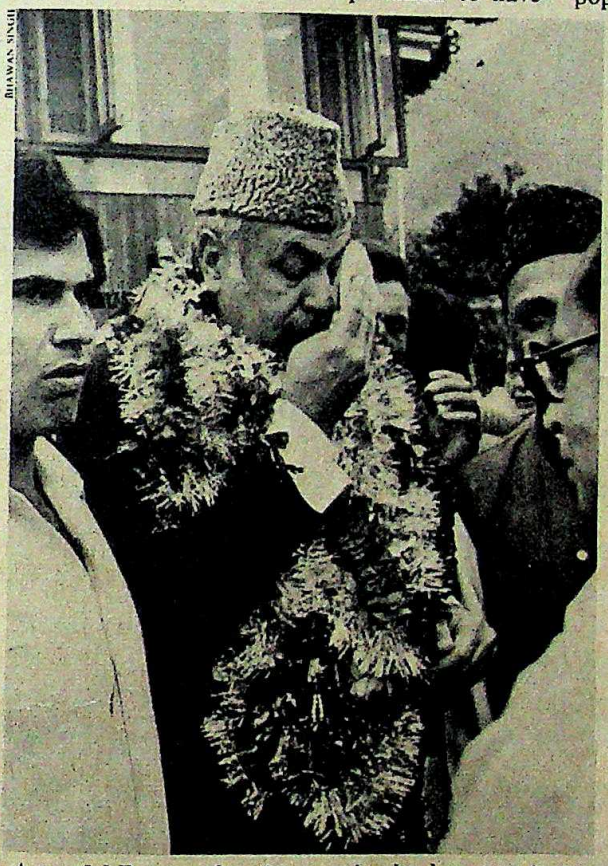
Sheikh with his highhanded treatment
fficer functionaries. Last year the Sheikh's
nger son, Tariq, 44, managing director of
State Tourism Development Corpora-
dismissed scores of corporation
loyees overnight without warning or
nversation. Tariq put the number at 190
ough corporation sources put it at closer
00. A prematurely balding, chubby fi-
e who resembles his brother, Tariq has
ually stayed away from the limelight.
t on this occasion, after the Srinagar court
ered some of the dismissals "illegal, void
nitio, inoperative and ineffective", Tariq
ended to ignore the verdict as he did
eral summons to court, leading to court
ures which were just as surely
ered (INDIA TODAY, August 16–31,
1).

Bureaucracy Changes: The NC
ernment has made strenuous effor-
build itself a pliable bureaucracy.
main thrust has been to cut down
cadres from the IAS, preferring
ead to induct personnel from the
mir Administrative Service (KAS)
key jobs. Chief Secretary Noor
hammad justifies this on the
und that morale of the KAS and the
e's bureaucratic cadre of 150,000
ld otherwise suffer and that a
l state has no need for the number
s cadres assigned to it. The terms
AS officials have been brought in
with those of the IAS and a number
s posts have been divided into
es of lower designation and staff-
with KAS personnel.

Thus, there is no longer a food
missioner, who would be IAS, but
a director of food and supplies
Jammu and another for Kashmir.
arly, where there was a state level
missioner for excise and taxation,
e are now four officials, one each
cise and taxation in Jammu and
Kashmir. Something like 25 posi-
like secretaries, additional and
secretary to the governor, direc-
and deputy commissioners, that would
Central Government's rules normally
IAS cadres are staffed by other officials.
result of this is that instead of a
oned 107 officials, the number of IAS
n is actually about 20 per cent less,
adre review currently under way may
whittle down the numbers. A less
ible result is an administration rewar-
with a poor public image and tainted
corruption.

First Steps: The Sheikh and Farooq
e woken up to this, however, belatedly.
additional chief secretary—Maq-
Ahmad, who happens to be related
e Sheikh, was last fortnight asked to
head a three-man committee to identify officials with a dubious reputation. The state Government is empowered to retire from service any official it wants who has completed 23 years in the Government or is older than 48 years and says it is serious in weeding out the corrupt. The committee is to report this month.

As for political corruption, both father and son have openly declared that the NC will deny tickets to those politicians who are proven to be corrupt or inept. "There is no way the NC will promote corruption," declares Farooq with panache, "The major steps it will take will be an eye-opener." Farooq is not the first politician to have promised to clean the Augean stables, and he'll need more than the broom of good intentions to tackle a party which, like most others in office, is so widely accused of having equated political decisions with political favours in return for political funds.



BHAWAN SINGH

A tearful Farooq after the swearing in: long way to go

Yet the task of cleansing the image of the party pales before the still harder job he will have of building himself up as a man who can step into the shoes of the political colossus that is his father. The Sheikh belongs to an era that is already long gone, an era of political giants who won India its independence. The Sheikh has had a less definable role than men like Nehru and Patel but his prime success, after Mrs Gandhi with commendable foresight handed him the reins in 1975, has also been responsible for hastening the end of his own era.

The Sheikh's lodestar has been the identity and autonomy of his people, which he has protected zealously, sometimes overzealously. And his main success has been a realisation at last that the Kashmiri Muslim is no longer an endangered species. "The Kashmiri personality is at the crossroads," argues Balraj Puri, author and one-time NC intimate. "There is no threat, not from Delhi, not from Jammu and not from Pakistan." The 1977 election demonstrated clearly that the valley could be its own master, and popular passions are less easily stirred by the old slogans.

Disruptive Forces: Nothing would wreck that achievement sooner than political instability. Waiting in the wings are forces of all manner: Islamic extremists represented by bodies such as the Jamait-e-Islami and its student wing, the Jamain-e-Tulah; regional chauvinistic forces both in the valley and the Jammu region which exert a disintegrating force; spurious regional forces encouraged by politicians who seek short-term gain in agitations for separate districts or the location of institutions; Hindu intolerance which chaffs at the idea of a Muslim majority in the state; and the everpresent pressures from across the ceasefire line which could turn malignant if the opportunity presents itself.

It is a tall order and there is considerable cynicism about Farooq's ability to fill it, either on his own or in concert with the Centre. At the moment, his main qualification is his family lineage, that he is the Sheikh's son, and it is obviously a qualification which will be exploited to the fullest. But if Farooq should fail, the same qualification will become a millstone around his neck. "I don't profess to be a God," he says with disarming candour that is unusual from a man in the political arena, "I can have shortcomings like any other human being. Maybe with time I will be able to overcome weaknesses."

Time is precisely what may become the crucial element in the change-over currently under way in Jammu & Kashmir. Time for Farooq to mature; time for him to consolidate his position; time to galvanise the party and mobilise it for elections in spite of a Shah possibly whittling at it from within; time for the Sheikh to remain symbolically at the helm of affairs long enough to see the transition through to success.

—SUMAN DUBEY in Srinagar

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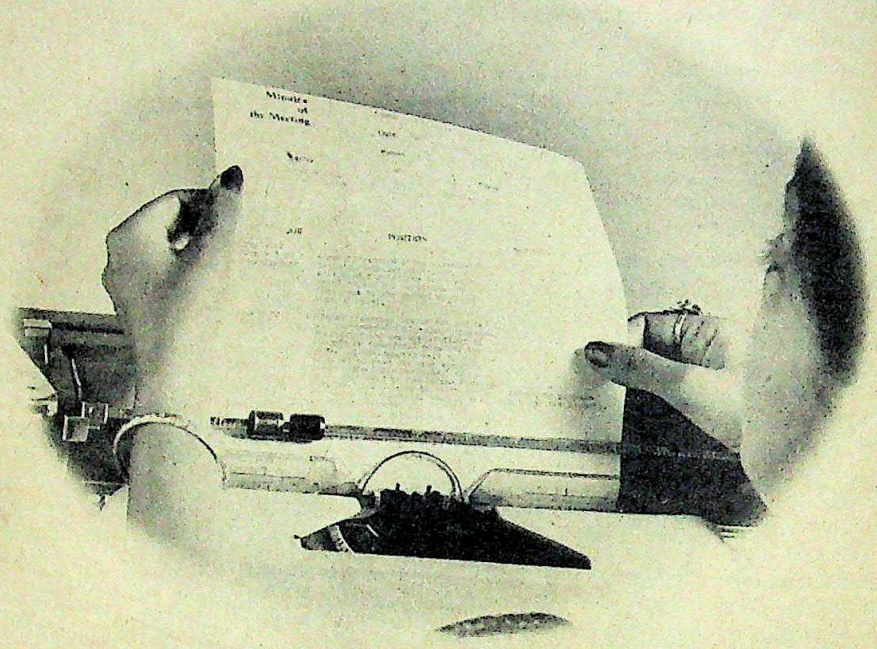
How often do you communicate on paper?



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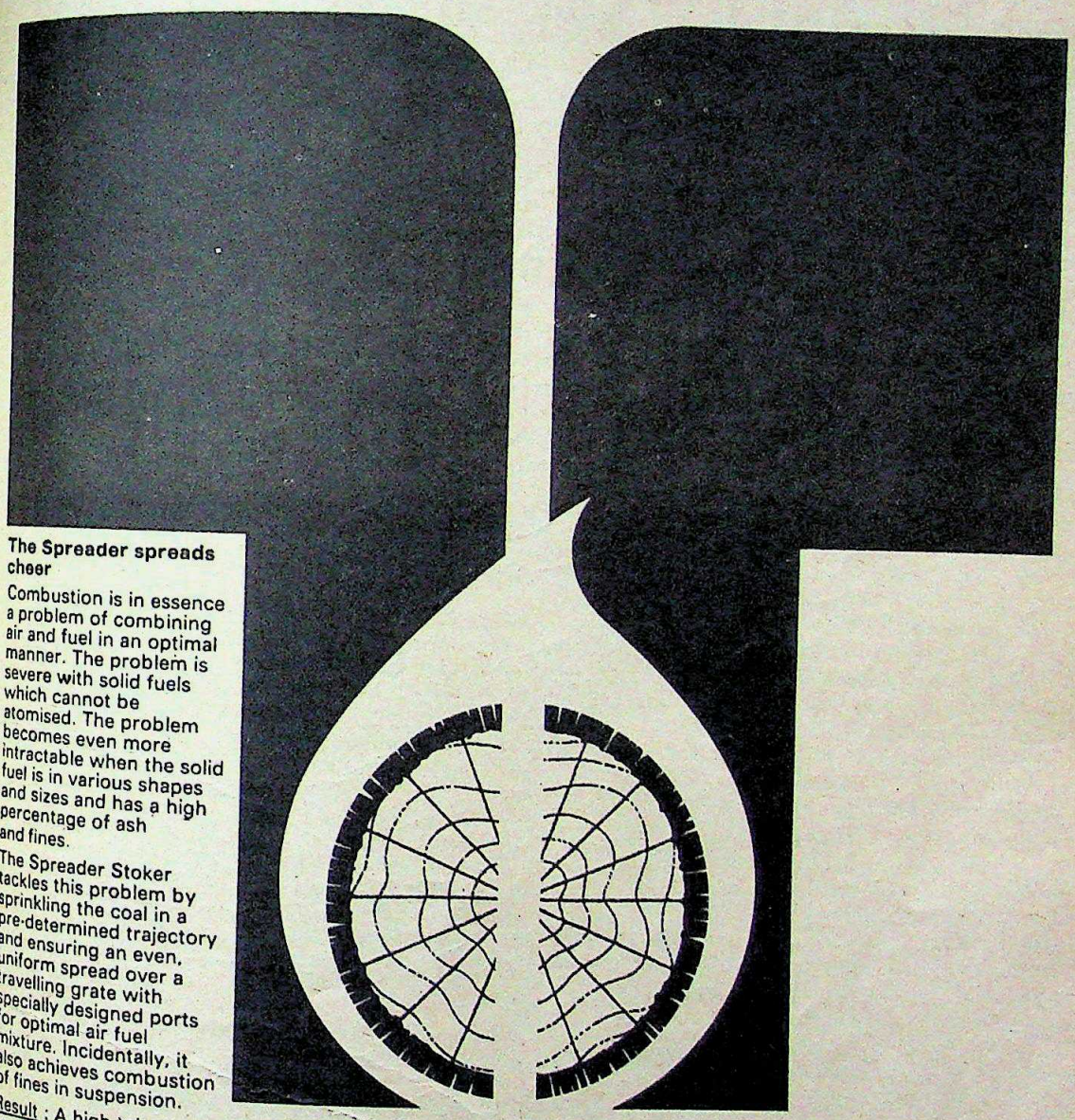

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KERALA

The Mental Gulf

THE MARKHANA family in Kerala has at last discovered the good life. With two sons working in the Gulf as mechanics and earning over Rs 8,000 between them, the family back home in Edapul taluk in Mallapuram district has pulled itself out of grinding poverty. After the brothers got their jobs two girls have been married off, a terraced house stands in the place of the old thatched hut and three acres of land have been bought.

The family, however, has not been able to enjoy this new-found prosperity. For the last year, the youngest son, Kumar, a 27-year-old taxi-driver has been suffering from attacks of breathlessness followed by severe anxiety and depression and has been put on sedatives by psychiatrists. Kumar's neurosis started soon after his brothers left for the Gulf. Psychiatrists feel that the disparity in his income, Rs 150 a month, and that of his brothers' has brought on these attacks.

He is not the only one in the family to suffer. Nalini, the wife of the eldest son, Unnikrishnan, has also had spells of neurosis. Married for three years, she sees her husband for a month every year when he comes home on leave. The psychiatrist treating her says that the prolonged separation from her husband has played havoc with her nerves.

Common Complaints: The plight of the Markhanas is not isolated. The Gulf boom, which has given 2.07 lakh workers jobs and transformed villages into "mini-Dubais", has taken its toll of the mental health of the people. Nervous disorders are common, marriages break-up frequently—even children have not been spared. The very fabric of domestic life in the state is being torn apart.

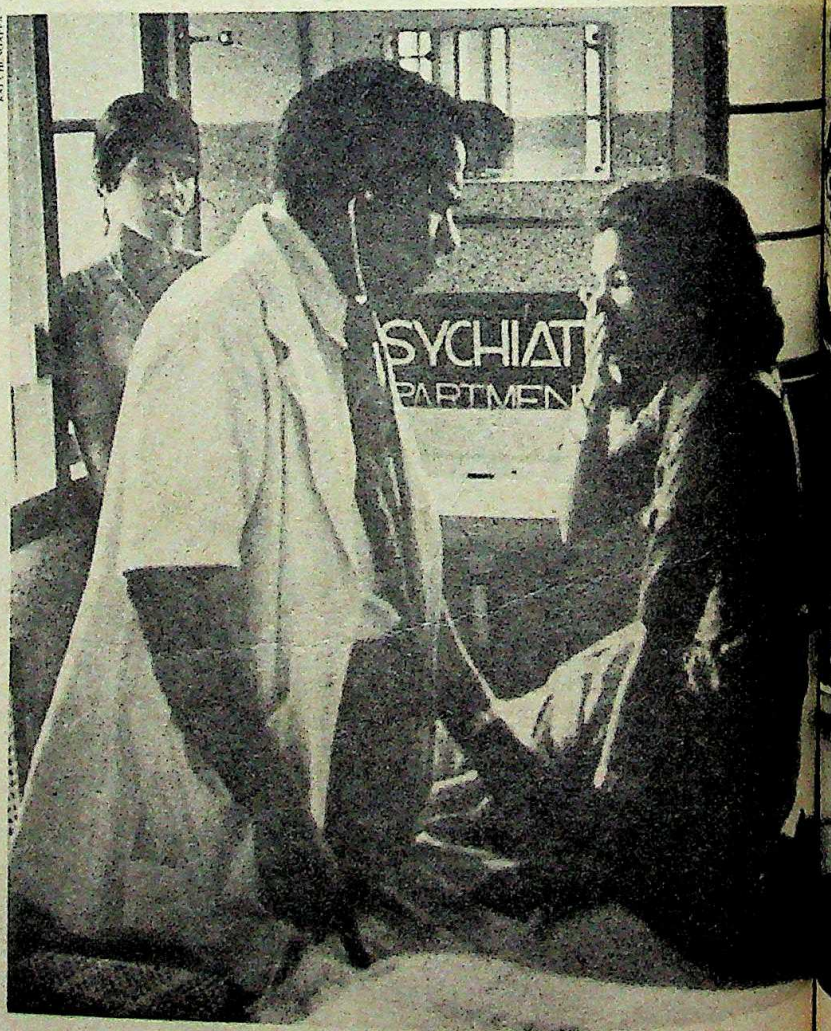
Leading psychiatrists report an unprecedented spurt in the number of persons falling ill in the state with at least half of them belonging to the so-called "Gulfite" families. According to the Director General of Health Services, Kerala last year had the highest number of mental disorders in the country with 8,970 patients being admitted to its three mental hospitals in Trivandrum, Trichur and Calicut. This was 1,201 more than Bihar which followed with 7,769 cases. With three out of every 10,000 persons suffering from mental illness, Kerala also has the dubious distinction of having the highest frequency of mental disorders apart from topping the list for bed-occupancy rates with seven patients for a bed a year.

The problem of mental illness has been found to be especially acute in the 'Gulf pockets' of the state. Of the 2.07 lakh people who emigrated from Kerala, the four districts of Trichur, Mallapuram, Cannanore and Trivandrum accounted for 63.4 per cent of them. In Trichur district, which has the highest number of emigrants in the state, Dr T.V. Francis, medical superintendent, Government Mental Hospital, estimates that "almost every second family which has a relative in the Gulf has a history of mental illness." A majority of these cases are handled by the 70 psychiatrists practising privately in the state and do not find their way into government statistics.

Domestic Discord: In Calicut, the seniormost psychiatrist in the state, the dapper 52-year-old Dr S. Santhakumar describes the spate of Gulf victims as "serious psychological problems". Santhakumar, who is also the adviser on mental health to the state Government, gloomily observed: "The entire family situation seems to be heading for a total breakdown in the Gulf belts of the state."

The number of patients admitted to the Mental Hospital in Calicut had gone up from 2,975 in 1977 to 3,517 last year. Dr Santhakumar said that a majority of them belong to Gulf families. "It's a problem that cannot be dismissed or ignored," warns Dr M.V. Geevarghese, a leading private psychiatrist in Trichur. Geevarghese says that in the past five years the number of his patients had almost doubled as "not one of these families seem to be living in peace."

This seems to be a boom time for psychiatrists in the state, with the number of practitioners increasing from a dozen before the Gulf exodus to its present strength of 70. Four months after he opened his clinic in Chavakkad taluk in Trichur district, Dr



A woman receiving psychiatric help: the worst hit

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...ld Dr R.M. Syed Mohammed said ...e is attending to a 1,000 patients, at ...0 of whom belong to Gulf families. ...alad taluk has sent 17,160 people to ...Gulf which is nearly 43 per cent of the ...of 40,224 that have emigrated from ...r district.

Incompatibility: Tragically most of the ...l instability has occurred amongst ...en aged between 15 and 25 years. Most ...en have husbands working in one of the ... Asian countries. "It's their ...mpatibility with their in-laws which lead ...st women cracking up," says Francis. ...of the women are from Muslim ...es, as at least 60 per cent of the ...ant populaion in the Gulf is Muslim. ...problem is aggravated because of the ...literacy rates with more than 65 per cent ...en not having passed secondary school. Workers in the Gulf normally marry ...n they come on leave and after a quick ...oon they go, leaving their wives, ...ly pregnant, with their parents. With ...ith emigrants sending Rs 500 crore every year to their families, trouble begins as the money is shared. The cash is normally sent to the emigrants' parents and often the wife gets very little. This leads to quarrels and in many cases the wives have fallen mentally ill when they are unable to cope with in-law problems.

Mohammed reports a case in which an 18-year-old housewife in Chavakkad married to a Gulfite tried to drown herself twice after her mother-in-law ill-treated her. Another woman from a nearby village called Elalluly, who is married to a driver working in Dubai, had a nervous breakdown after her in-laws abused her and refused to part with any money that her husband had sent. The turning point proved to be when a letter she wrote to her husband asking for money was intercepted by her mother-in-law. She has now returned to her hometown but is still mentally ill. Her condition deteriorated further when she delivered a baby and none of her husband's relatives visited her; nor was he present on the occasion.

Frustration: Psychiatrists like Santhakumar believe that prolonged post-marital separation leads to deviant sexual behaviour by both partners, ending in guilt and tension. With sexual frustration building up, many wives have entered into extra-marital relationships. In Nilambur, a 25-year-old woman married to a construction worker in Abu Dhabi seduced her 21-year-old brother-in-law. The result is that the boy has become psychotic because of his guilt feelings. To overcome their frustration many of the emigrants to the Gulf have become homosexual or have started going to prostitutes. In a recent case in Dubai, an emigrant took his brother-in-law over by promising employment but kept him as his lover. The prolonged separation has also led to sexual impotency and premature ejaculation in men, leading to more mental tension.

The problem has become acute with most of the Gulf countries passing strict rules restricting emigrants from bringing their families with them. These separations have also fuelled suspicion with each partner suspecting the other's fidelity and many marriages have not withstood the pressure.

In Mallapuram, one migrant felt that his wife had delivered too early and had the baby's blood tested to see if it matched his. Because of the easy divorce laws for Muslims, "postal divorces" have become common with many Muslims breaking matrimonial bonds with a letter after they suspected their wives' fidelity.

Six months ago, V.M. Sethu, 48, of Chemanoor, who has spent the last five years in the Gulf, divorced his wife of 22 years by post as he suspected her. After that he suffered a breakdown and had to be treated for psychosis in India. Sethu went back to his wife when he realised that she was innocent and it was only their months of separation that had put doubts in his mind. But not many have happy endings like Sethu's. K. Beeru Sahib, 58, chairman of the Chavakkad Municipal Council said: "Divorces are becoming too common. We discuss marital disputes mostly in the community during mosque meetings."

Sahib also reports another disturbing phenomenon in his taluk: children of emigrants are becoming delinquents and turning to alcohol and drugs. In Calicut, Santhakumar confirms the rise in juvenile delinquency and says the excess flow of money has ruined a lot of children. In Kunnamkullam, a 12-year-old boy beat up his mother and demanded money from her. When she refused, he wrote to his father in Abu Dhabi accusing her of having affairs with other men. The marriage almost broke up but the husband came to Kerala and the boy was exposed after a psychiatrist confirmed his pyschopathic personality.

An old thatched hut next to "a Dubai-manzil": a growing disparity

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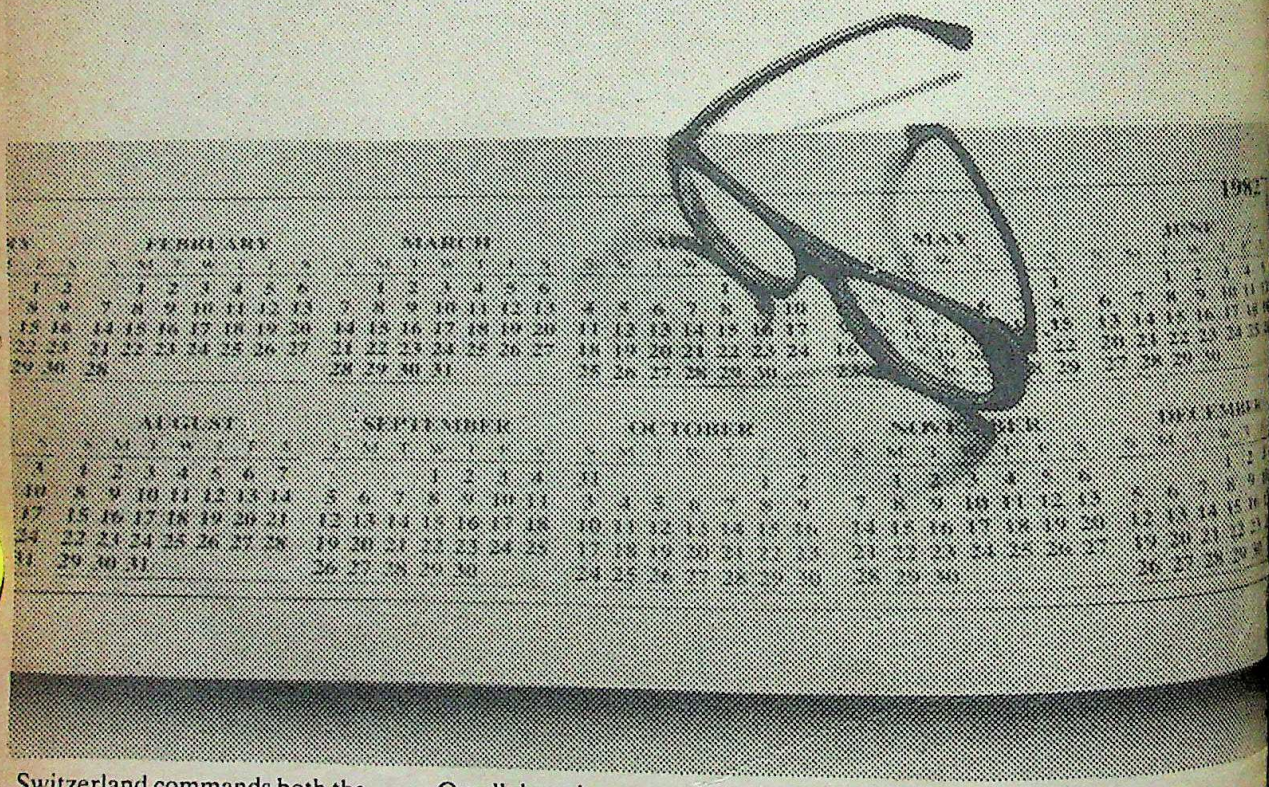

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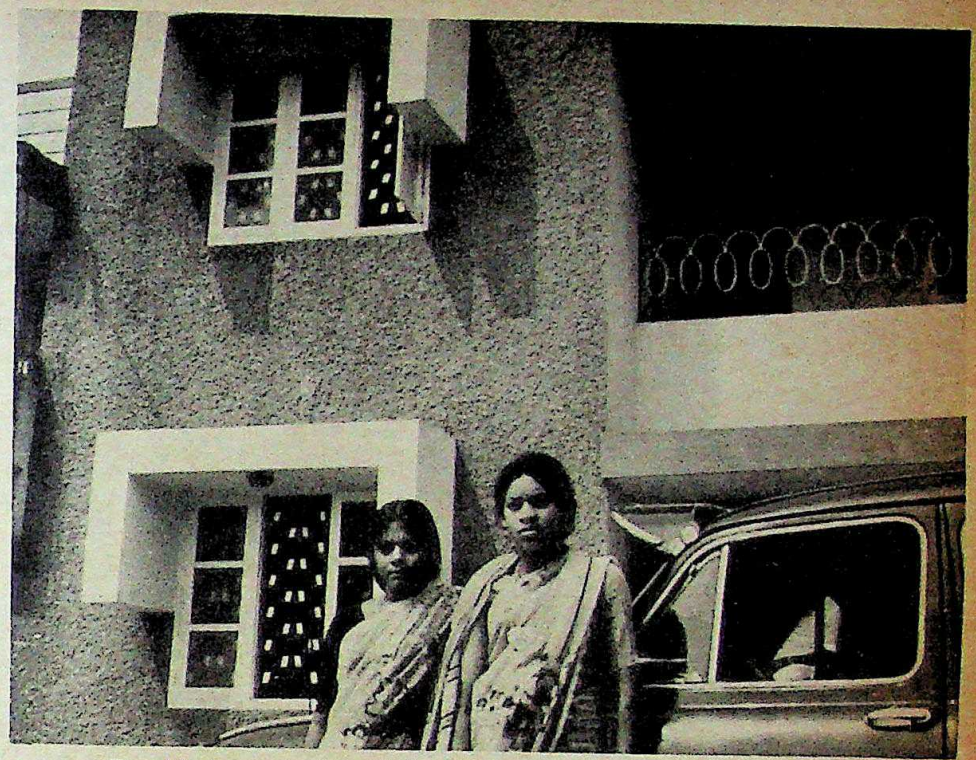
Santhakumar: "In fact, the problems of families seem only to be multiplying prosperity and seldom do they have a married life."

PSYCHIATRISTS agree on the fact that the alarming rise in mental disorders seem to be directly related to the state's new found prosperity. They are not the only ones worried about the impact of the inflow of Gulf money. Even economists are alarmed by the extravagant and wasteful expenditures indulged in by the families. A recent study made by Madras University's Agricultural Economics Research Centre (AERC) has come up with some startling facts about the impact of foreign remittances on the rural economy of Kerala. And Dr C. Arputharaj, director of AERC, who headed the study group: "There has been a substantial growth of the *nouveau riche*. This new class cuts across caste and communal lines and manifests the typical excess of its new financial power."

The study found that "mini-Gulfs" have sprouted in the talukas of Chavakkad, Kunnar in Mallapuram, Chirayinkil and Varkala in Trivandrum. In each of these, more than 5,000 residents had gone to the Gulf with the largest number of 6,972 coming from Chavakkad. The group, therefore, chose Chavakkad taluk for a sample study of 1,000 households with at least one member in the Gulf. Some of the facts revealed are:

- The average annual income for each household has increased six-fold after the Gulf from Rs 3,522 to Rs 21,035 while that of a family which had no members abroad remained static at Rs 5,675;
- The average expenses on food, clothing, education, medicine, recreation and luxuries shot up from Rs 4,372 to Rs 20,893 while that of normal households stood at a meagre Rs 5,038;
- The total value of assets per household is a phenomenal Rs 3.82 lakh as compared to the all-India average of Rs 11,675. The maximum amount had been invested in buildings and land. The number of terraced houses rose from nine to 74 while thatched houses fell from 59 to 11. While initially only 12 house had mosaic flooring, today 61 houses have them. Previously 78 houses were electrified, now only eight remain. Fifteen houses were valued above Rs 1 lakh; and
- The 150 households had purchased an average of Rs 12,682 worth of goods. The breakup was: 126 radios, 78 transistors, 104 tape recorders, 29 stereo sets, 33 refrigerators, 18 motor vehicles and five TVs.

Conspicuous by their absence, despite the huge inflow of money, was higher savings and investments. Instead, the families have mostly gone in for "sterile" investments such as land, buildings and consumer durables. Said Arputharaj regretfully: "Not only have these remittances from Gulf countries remained aloof of the general economy, it has fostered enclaves of high liquidity, making for major shifts in the spending pattern of households which in the long run will add to economic and social instability."



Two Muslim women in their house: absent husbands, cars and desolation

Extravagance: Already Chavakkad is feeling the impact of this unbridled extravagance. Land prices have skyrocketed with a series of "Dubai manzils" sprouting up. Chavakkad now looks like an upper-middle class area in a big city and not the sleepy fishing village that it once was. Vegetable and meat prices have soared to dizzy levels. A kilo of fish which used to cost Rs 5 now costs Rs 25. Labour charges for construction have shot up dramatically and a mason now earns a minimum of Rs 35 as compared to Rs 12 before.

Socially too there has been a drastic change. Cotton clothes have been discarded for synthetics. It has become a status symbol to shop in a car or drive all the way to Trichur town 25 km away to watch a film. The wealth has led to jealousy and envy among neighbours and an acute consciousness of status. The study group observed "the respect that one commands from others in the neighbourhood depends on money and nothing else".

Psychiatrists believe that the drastic change in the post-boom socio-economic structure has been one of the main causes for the increase in mental disorders. The affluence has split up a lot of homes. A 26-year-old housewife in Trichur became a manic-depressive after her husband decided to take another wife because he found that he could "afford one more". Her husband refuses to divorce her because he wants her to look after the children.

The doctors are finding it difficult to treat these patients for several reasons. Mohammed said that conventional psychotherapy methods failed as most of the patients felt that their ailments were physical and not mental. In fact, he had a lot of dropouts when he refused to use a stethoscope, the symbol of a doctor in rural areas. Now he examines their chest perfunctorily with the scope to reassure them.

Psychiatrists are now becoming increasingly disheartened as there seems to be no end to the long line of people suffering from the Gulf syndrome. Said Santhakumar: "Mental illnesses in these families have become more of a rule than an exception. I don't know how we can get out of this muddle." Mohammed sees it as part and parcel of the social change and does not think anything can rectify the damage. Francis feels that if the in-laws could adjust to their daughters-in-law and treat them more gently, many of the problems could be solved. But he predicts gloomily: "If this wave of victims continues unabated it will destroy the family set-up. Ultimately this may be the factor that will prevent further emigrations."

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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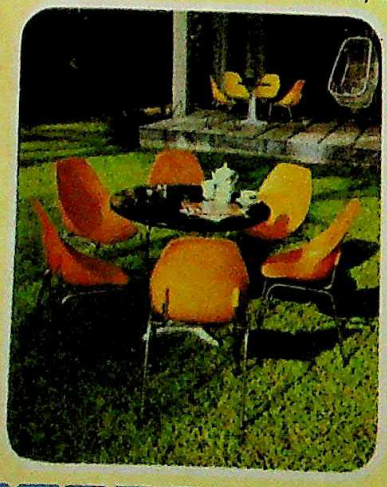

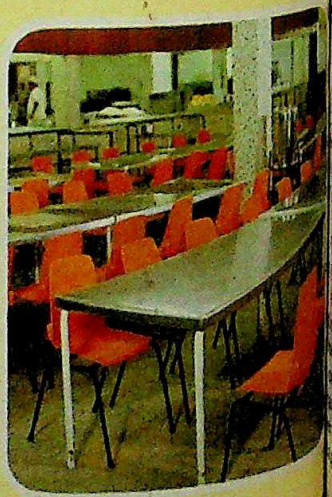

Moderna occupying pride of place (left) on the lawn (centre) in a board room and (right) in an industrial canteen.

MODERNA—the versatile seating system

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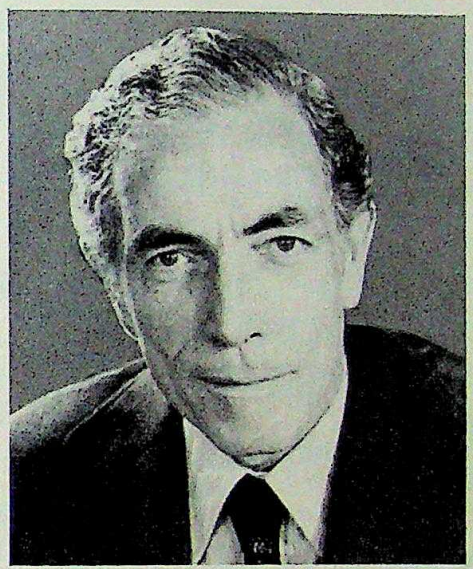
S RELATIONS

Favourable Climate

SENATOR Claiborne Pell, a liberal Democrat from the north-eastern state of Rhode Island, is a ranking member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. This committee, on which Pell has always been a power to reckon with, is perhaps just as important as the White House when it comes to establishing, setting, or changmerican foreign policy. All key White ouse appointments to the State Department the selection of ambassadors must be apved by the Foreign Relations Committee. Should the committee choose to clash the President on the conduct of any t of international policy it can inflict a ishing blow on White House initiatives. committee usually shows its disagreement ying to cut off arms assistance or holding nfirmation of a presidential appointee. conflicts occur frequently. The most example of this was during the Vietnam ars when Congress, on the recommendation the Foreign Relations Committee, voted to the President's war powers and withhold unds for the war. Similar disagreements veloping over El Salvador and Pakistan. Pell's seniority on the committee, his admired experience and talent in tackle thorniest of issues with aplomb and ur, his influence with committee Chair- Charles Percy have led to his emergence one of the most important voices among America's foreign policy ators. In his various duties, Pell is ably assisted by Peter lbraith, son of the illustrious Harvard economist and former mbassador to India. Young Galbraith's recent staff report on India ved wide circulation in the State Department and the White se.



Pell: powerful voice

The visit gave Americans a new appreciation of India—not the India of bullock carts and starving masses—but rather the India that is an economic, technological and political power in its region and globally. Mrs Gandhi certainly heard the message that Administration and Congress take India seriously and want to do business. Hopefully, the days of ignoring each other and of snide attacks on each other's policies are past.

Mrs Gandhi's visit to Washington was a definite plus. But some foreign policy makers believe her foreign policy could be a little more activist in nature. Pell discussed the aftermath of the Gandhi visit in an interview with INDIA TODAY. *Excerpts:*

Q. What would you say was the most significant outcome of Mrs Gandhi's visit to the United States?

A. The trip unquestionably improved the climate for US-India relations and this, rather than any concrete result, was in my view the most important result. The visit gave Americans a new appreciation of India—not the India of bullock carts and starving masses—but rather the India that is an economic, technological and political power in its region and globally. Mrs Gandhi certainly heard the message that the Administration and Congress take India seriously and want to do business. Hopefully, the days of ignoring each other and of snide attacks on each other's policies are past.

Q. What was your personal impression of the Indian prime minister? What impact did she have on Congress during the meetings with the Senate Foreign Relations and House Foreign Affairs Committee? Did the meetings with Congress give the Hill a better perspective in areas in which India and the US differ, and in what way?

A. I have been impressed with Mrs Gandhi's political acumen since I first met her during a brief trip to India in 1962. Although I have disagreed with some of her policies in the past—notably the Emergency, the 1974 nuclear explosion and the take-over of Sikkim—I and other members of Congress have admitted the material progress India has made under her leadership. Her reception on Capitol Hill was very warm.

Q. Is India's position on Soviet troops in Afghanistan clearer now than before? Do you believe that Mrs Gandhi has gone from equivocating on the Afghanistan issue to an unequivocal opposition to the presence of Soviet troops?

A. Obviously, India's position on the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan has evolved since the January 1980 UN vote. I am convinced that the Indian Government now recognises dangers—as have the Indian people—posed to India by Soviet troops south of the Hindu Kush. I also appreciated Mrs Gandhi's forceful statement of opposition to the Soviet occupation. One important test, however, will be whether India joins virtually every other significant non-aligned country and votes in the United Nations General Assembly in favour of a Soviet withdrawal.

Q. What positive role should India play vis-a-vis ridding Afghanistan of Soviet troops? Do you think Mrs Gandhi should or could be a little more activist in her approach in seeking a solution to the Afghanistan crisis?

A. India is uniquely positioned to exercise real influence on the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union values its friendship with India greatly. India should make it clear that the Soviet failure to get out of Afghanistan will involve serious costs to the Indo-Soviet relationship. At the same time, India can use its credibility with the Soviets to help achieve a negotiated solution to the Afghanistan crisis.

Q. Has the US re-evaluated its relations with Pakistan? Do you think there are tensions developing in US-Pakistan relations? Why?

A. I have been a strong opponent of the present US-Pakistan military assistance relationship. I believe our assistance to Pakistan is widely seen in that country as US support for a brutal military

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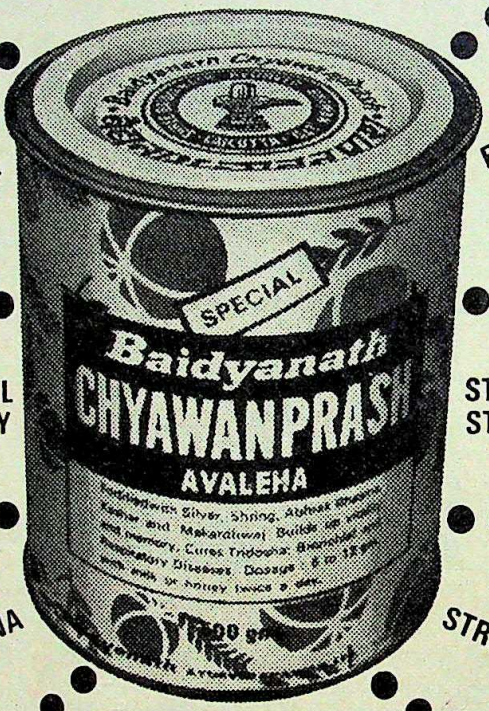

BRONCHIAL PROBLEMS

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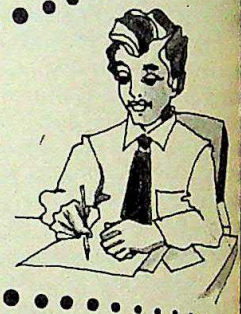

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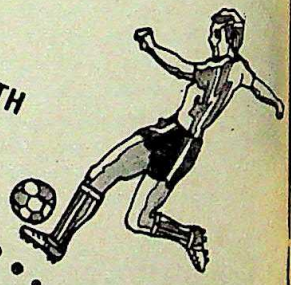

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...ership and will earn us the enmity of many of the Pakistani ...ple. I do believe a US-Pakistani relationship is in our national ...est, but I think such a relationship must be based on respect for ...damental human rights and must have the support of the ...stani people as expressed through the democratic process. I am ...author of legislation, approved by Congress, linking US ...ance to Pakistan to that country's human rights record and ...gress towards democracy. Therefore, I do believe we should ...ditate our relationship ...Pakistan.

Q. Do you believe that ...le of sophisticated mili... hardware to Pakistan ...s a threat to India's ...ity? What concrete re... ances must India receive ...the US that Pakistan ...not turn US supplied ...ons against India? Do ...ir assurances have any ...ning?

A. Some US weapons ...s to Pakistan, such as the F-16 aircraft, do pose a ...ential threat to India. I opposed the F-16 sale and helped lead ...unsuccessful fight in Congress to overturn it. I believe weapons ...vided to Pakistan should be those best suited to the defence of ...country from Soviet pressures or incursions from Afganistan. ...not opposed to the sale of sophisticated weapons for defensive ...oses—although, as noted above, I oppose a military relation... with the Zia regime—but I do not think a long range attack fighter is a purely defensive weapon.

Some US weapons sales to Pakistan, such as the F-16 aircraft, do pose a potential threat to India. I opposed the F-16 sale and helped lead the unsuccessful fight in Congress to overturn it. I believe weapons provided to Pakistan should be those best suited to the defence of that country from Soviet pressure or incursions from Afghanistan.

Q. Do you believe that Pakistan is going ahead with its nuclear bomb project? Has the US done anything to deter Pakistan from this course? If Pakistan does acquire a nuclear weapon what would be its geopolitical effect?

A. I have seen little evidence to suggest Pakistan has altered its nuclear ambitions as a result of US assistance. I believe only an India-Pakistan agreement not to acquire nuclear weapons, or adherence by both to the non-proliferation treaty will avoid a nuclear arms race in the subcontinent. Such an arms race could be fatal given the history of India-Pakistan conflict. I would like to emphasise that India has everything to gain from a nuclear weapons-free zone in South Asia. A Pakistan bomb will certainly undermine India's dominant position in the region.

Q. What are your views on India's relations with its smaller neighbours?

A. India's take-over of Sikkim was in my view a blot on India's reputation for moral world leadership. India had a treaty obligation to protect Sikkim's independence; an obligation which India abused. It sets a terrible precedent and understandably India's smaller neighbours are concerned. I believe India should allow the people of Sikkim a genuine opportunity to freely determine their own future.

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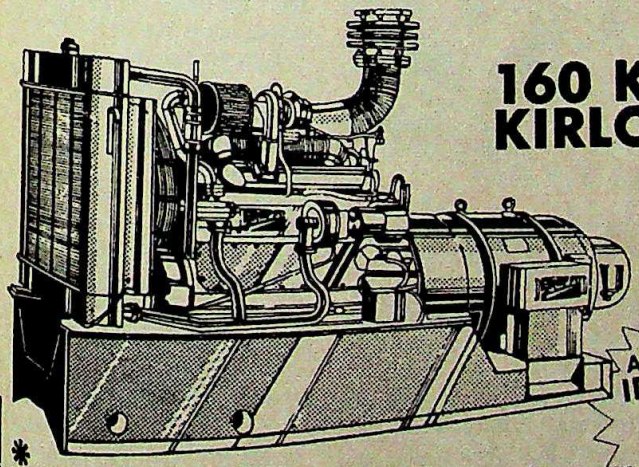

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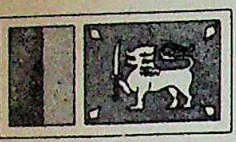
SRI LANKA

Mood Of Discontent



WHEN the United National Party (UNP) entered the final year of its Parliamentary term on July 23, even its most sanguine supporters conceded that the first five years had taken a heavy toll of its once heady popularity. In this fiercely politicised electorate, psephology is second cousin to astrology and every man is his own opinion poller and pundit. Election forecasting is already an exciting and inexpensive national sport.

If the electoral mood is distinctly 'oppositional', the opposition leadership is manifestly disoriented and dispirited. Not wholly of their own doing, this is the cumulative result of many finely calculated moves by President J.R. Jayawardene in his determined bid to break the familiar pattern of Sri Lanka politics, the in-out pendulum swing between the two main contenders, and the discontinuity in policy, chiefly economic policy.

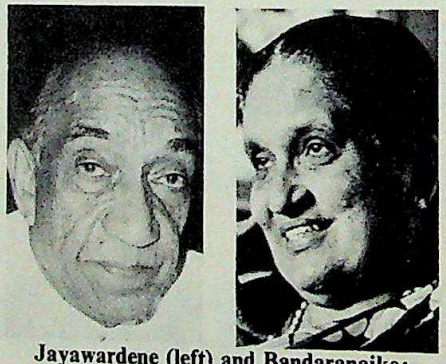
Using its four-fifths majority, the UNP changed the constitution to give the island an executive Presidency, introduced proportional representation (PR) with an unusually high cut-off point (12.5 per cent), and led an unprecedented frontal attack on the Opposition by depriving its formidable rival Mrs Bandaranaike of her civic rights for seven years. However, popular predictions hold that only the evident advantages of the PR system in conjunction with a fragmented Opposition can possibly give the UNP the largest number of seats in the next 196-member Parliament. In the circumstances, even a simple majority is considered doubtful.

Strong Executive: Jayawardene's proclaimed aim was a strong, stable executive, able to take "the hard unpopular decisions" necessary to escape the welfare system, an essential linchpin of Sri Lanka's uniquely resilient democracy. An uncertain blessing, the "open economy" has the full backing of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Sri Lanka Aid Group.

The object of the exercise, the Opposition says, was merely the perpetuation of the party and the President in power. On its own, the right wing UNP has the strongest support base—an almost irreducible third of the national electorate. Only a Centre-Left alliance between the middle-of-the-road Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and the traditional Left has been able, in recent years, to defeat the UNP. Now that alliance is in tatters.

Yet the ruling party leadership senses a sullen, probably hostile electorate which has a notorious legacy of "throwing the rascals out" even when it has not been too enamoured of the alternative. The mass mood is a product of larger social and economic discontent. In his anniversary address and first formal TV appearance, President Jayawardene said that 50 per cent of Sri Lankans still earn only Rs 300 a month. The shops are full but the old system of subsidised essentials, despite the vexations of ration cards and queues at cooperatives, continues.

Restricted Benefit: So far the benefits of the UNP's faith in the 'open economy' and "the trickle down" theory have been reaped largely by the business community and the old propertied and privileged strata. The real rewards, the UNP argues, of the major projects (the Mahaveli diversion, the huge construction programme, the trade zones) will spread to the lower income groups in a few years. In an effort at ensuring a second term to reap the benefit of this delayed effect, the new August 3 constitutional amendment



Jayawardene (left) and Bandaranaike: picking up the pieces

will enable Jayawardene to hold a Presidential poll even before the Parliamentary elections which are due by July next. Evidently he favours his own chances in single combat. If he wins, his party's chances will probably improve.

The move has made the Opposition disarray even more public. First to enter the list of contenders was Maitripala Senanayake, MP, long-time deputy of Mrs Bandaranaike, who now leads a rival faction which he claims is the "legitimate SLFP" Then came Dr Colvin R. de Silva, the leader of the socialist (formerly Trotskyist) LSSP (Lanka Sama Samaja Party). Next, with the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) not contesting the Presidency, was the very much smaller Tamil Congress (TC) which nominated its leader G.G. Ponnambalam Jr, a token contender. All eyes, however, were on Bandaranaike's SLFP.

The party's central committee met August 6 and Hector Kobbekaduwe, an minister, was heavily tipped as the choice. He is backed by a radical, pro-C group led by Mrs Bandaranaike's yo daughter, Chandrika Kumaratu However, Mrs Bandaranaike, sensitive charges of favouritism, would be reluctan nominate Kobbekaduwe who is her co

Consensus Candidate: Mrs Band naike, the communists, the socialists smaller left parties are in search of "common candidate" to take on J wardene. Dr Colvin R. de Silva, a class- of Jayawardene and a brilliant lawye widely favoured. He has two disqual tions: his Marxist politics and his caste

With the majority Sinhala-Budd vote quite evenly divided between traditional rivals, the support of minorities (Tamil, Christians, Muslims Indian plantation labour) is a key factor the calculus of Presidential contests, "block votes" could be vital. Since last racial troubles, Jayawardene has tak firm line of "racial-religious harmony"

Though he has paid great per attention to Buddhist affairs, the U apparent solicitude for the minorities aroused Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism Colombo meeting of a new Sin Buddhist organisation, launched by a of monks and lay leaders, was attacked gang of intruders whom Opposition branded as pro-UNP goons. One of t injured was Professor Ediriweera Sarat dra, well-known playwright and for ambassador to Paris. He has been wri pamphlets and making speeches denoun the new Singapore-style consumerism attack on the Buddhist value system appeared on Mrs Bandaranaike's pla last month.

Communal Violence: The anniv week ended on an inauspicious note. R disturbances in Galle, the southern pro capital, forced the Government to decla Emergency, introduce censorship and pose a curfew in the area. Galle has a s concentration of Muslims, traditiona trading community monopolising prosperous gem business.

A quarrel over a parrot, a fight be a Muslim landlord and a Sinhalese te and a Sinhalese schoolboy mistaken Muslim and assaulted, formed the fa chain reactions of communal violence. were two deaths, and several cases of While the situation is now calm, Government is investigating the po involvement of "opposition elements

—MERVYN DE SILVA in C

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MAURITIUS

Firmly Bound

Mrs Gandhi and Jugnauth in Port Louis: coming closer

AT THE accelerated pace at which Prime Minister Indira Gandhi is rewriting India's foreign policy, External Affairs Minister Narasimha Rao might well find that his services are no longer required. Less than two weeks after adding a significant new chapter to Indo-US relations during her visit to Washington, Mrs Gandhi's newly-won Boeing 'Lhotse' was pressed into VVIP duty once again. The destination: Port Louis, Mauritius and Maputo, Mozambique. The object: to buttress existing ties with two strategically important states in whose scheme of things India figures prominently. The real focus: the Indian Ocean.

Of the two, the Mauritian visit is of more immediate importance as demonstrated by the fact that the new Government headed by Aneerood Jugnauth, 52, a British-trained Queen's barrister, had barely completed two months in office when Mrs Gandhi was the first foreign head of state to have been invited to the Indian Ocean island. The fact that out of the island's total population of one million, 52 per cent are of Indian origin also played a key role in raising high expectations within the Mauritian Government *vis-à-vis* Mrs Gandhi's visit.

Port Louis had prepared extensively for the visit. The picturesque capital was attired in a riot of colour with the Indian tricolours flanking the Mauritian four-coloured flags flying gaily from public buildings and lining the main roads. Triumphal arches bearing blown-up photographs of Mrs Gandhi, Jugnauth and Governor-General Veerendranath Burrenchowbay dominated key sites. All were intended to convey an unmistakeable message: the high regard in which the new Government holds both Mrs Gandhi and India. She is, in fact, the only head of state to have been invited to the islands during her two previous visits being in 1970 and '75.

Distinct Views: In Mauritius itself, there were two distinct views in circulation, prior to Mrs Gandhi's arrival at Plaisance airport, regarding the motive of the prompt invitation. One was that in inviting Mrs Gandhi the new Government wanted to please the majority Hindu community that it was anti-Hindu. The community has been apprehensive about its future under the Muslim regime following the dismissal from high posts of many Hindus on the grounds of their alleged connection with the previous government under Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam.

The other view was far broader in its scope: namely, Indian support for Mauritius's efforts to regain possession of Diego Garcia and keep the Indian Ocean a zone of peace. Said Harish Budhoo the island's deputy prime minister: "Above all else, her visit will boost Mauritius's image in the international arena. She is not just the prime minister of the largest democracy in the world, but a great leader of Asia and the Third World. There is no doubt that Mauritius will feel the stronger in having her as an ally in the struggle to assert our sovereignty over Diego Garcia."

It was obvious that the new Government was making an all-out effort to put its relations with India on a level much higher than the hitherto restricted sphere of cultural and economic affinity, and reach a political convergence on the Indian Ocean, Diego Garcia, nonalignment and Third World imperatives. This, as the visit proved, was achieved without too much trouble.

Early Overtures: In fact, connections with the new Government started much before the elections when it was clear that the Movement Militant Mauricien (MMM)—Parti Socialiste Mauricien (PSM) alliance was heading for a landslide victory over Ramgoolam's Labour Party (Chinese bookmakers in Port Louis were offering 20 to 1 odds on a Labour victory). Both Jugnauth and the party strong man Paul Berenger, 37, currently minister for finance, visited India to establish contacts while foreign minister Jean Claude L'estrac, 34, was in India just two months before the elections.

L'estrac, a journalist by profession, was wildly optimistic about Mrs Gandhi's visit when interviewed by INDIA TODAY in Paris on the eve of Mrs Gandhi's visit. An articulate and persuasive young man and former opposition whip, L'estrac said: "Mrs Gandhi has always evinced a keen interest in Mauritius, but relations have been strained in the last two years mainly because of the ambiguity displayed by the previous Mauritian Government on the Diego Garcia issue. This naturally struck a discordant note in Indo-Mauritian ties. We will right that. We are firmly committed to being nonaligned and in maintaining the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace."

Diego Garcia, the V-shaped coral island 1,200 miles north-east of the Mauritian coastline, figured prominently in the talks between the two sides during Mrs Gandhi's visit. In an address to the National Assembly on the second day of her three-day visit, the Indian prime minister expressed her solid support to the "legitimate rights of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean".

IF DIEGO Garcia proved a major political embarrassment to the previous Mauritian Government, it is also the most dominant and potentially explosive issue facing the new one. Britain detached the 15-mile-long atoll from Mauritius in 1965 as part of the deal which led to the colony's independence three years later. Today, with Britain having sublet the atoll to the US it is, according to the *Strategic Review*, "the second most important military base for the US anywhere in the world".

The Mauritian Government appears determined to exploit all political, diplomatic and judicial channels for reclaiming the islands and is confident that it has a sound legal case. India's unflinching support in the form of Mrs Gandhi's statement will, the Government expects, considerably aid their efforts. As Berenger told INDIA TODAY: "It

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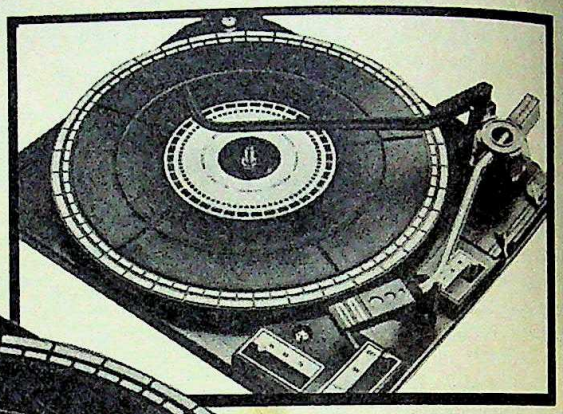

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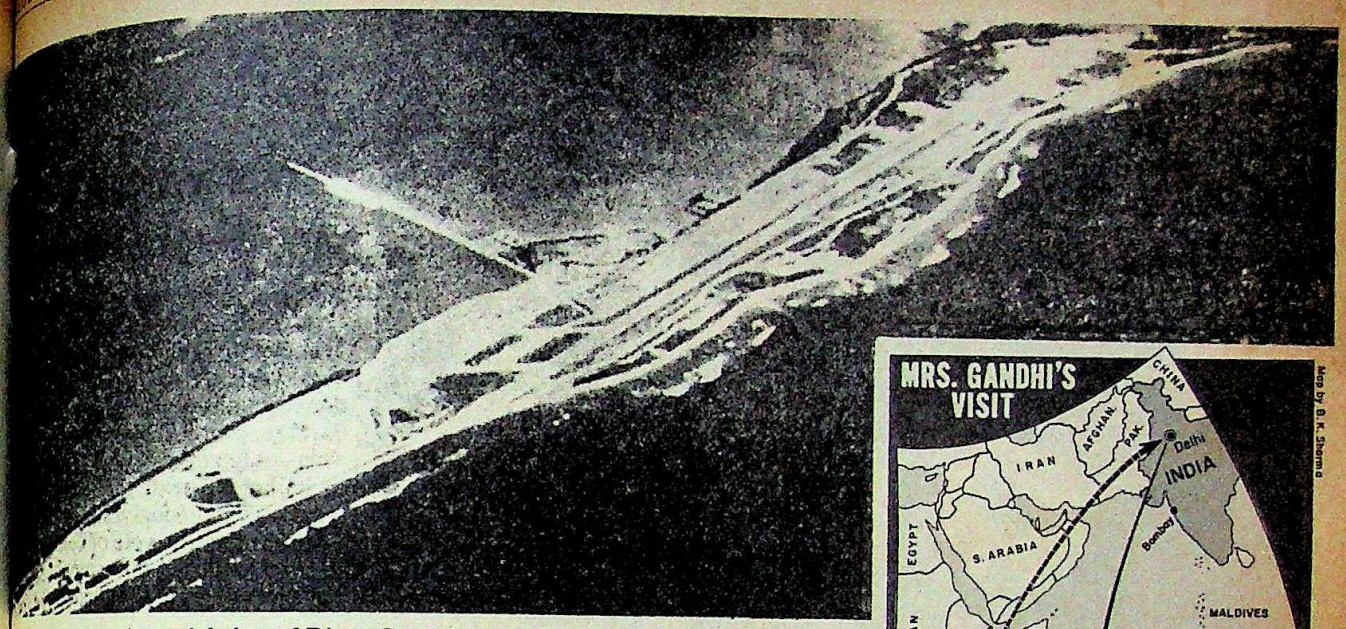
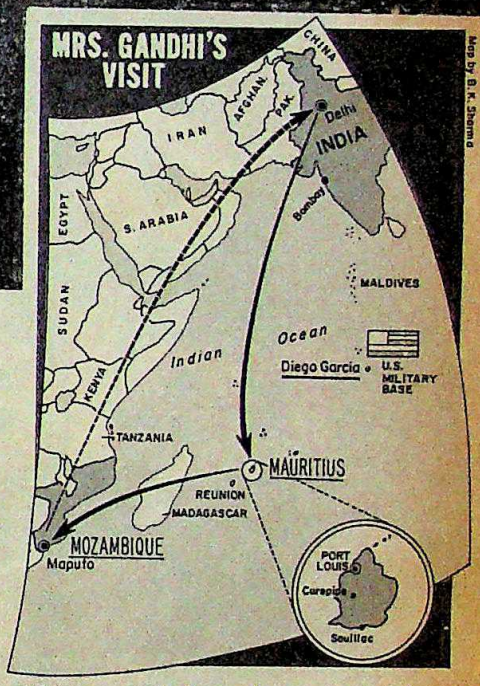


An aerial view of Diego Garcia: bone of contention



...e in the fitness of things that we make ...mon cause to liberate the Indian Ocean ...m the clutches of the superpowers and ...pressure the US to return Diego Garcia ...ritius."

...dded L'estrac: "We can't fight the ...h or force the US to dismantle its ...ary base on Diego Garcia. What we can ...mobilise world opinion on this issue. ...ritius decides to host the non-aligned ...mit (which it is likely to do), as chair-...n she can play a powerful role in ...reading Diego Garcia's sovereignty ...

Other Problems: There are also other ...perations governed by Mauritius's ...ural economy. Unemployment is ...rently running at around 20 per cent and three successive cyclones have pulverised its sugar crop, its main financial prop. The country is heavily dependent on external aid. Mauritian leaders feel that India can play a vital role in shoring up the economy. India agreed to a Rs 100 million credit during last fortnight's visit and also to help out in oil exploration and refining, civil aviation, shipping and small-scale industries.

But the field, according to Mauritian leaders, is still wide open. In fact, one particular area of interest for Mauritius is to seek Indian expertise in deep sea mining for manganese nodules. They also hope that the renewed friendship forged during the visit will succeed in opening up Indian markets for exports from Mauritius and vice versa. This will also help in reducing the island's dominant trade relationship with the racist regime in South Africa.

...m left) Berenger, Jugnauth, Commerce Minister Bhagat and L'estrac: looking Indiawards

Currently, however, the visit's unspoken significance lay in Mauritian plans still on the anvil, to turn the country into an Indian-style republic within the Commonwealth, ending the British Queen's role as a head of state and replacing the governor-general with a non-executive president. The Mauritian election last June, in which the MMM-PSM alliance won an incredible 60 seats out of the 60 contested, signified the first democratic transfer of power through the ballot-box in any Organisation of African Unity (OAU) member state.

Important Breakthrough: In the 25 years since black Africa embarked on the road to independence, only one African head of state, Leopold Senghor of Senegal, has voluntarily retired from power. Four have died in office of natural causes, 25 have been ousted in coups, five have been assassinated or executed, and only once, in Sierra Leone, has an incumbent government lost an election. Mauritius with an effective one party state of impeccable democratic credentials, now seems to have shown the way to black Africa for a wide open democratic political system.

As far as the new Government is concerned, its international exposure during the Gandhi visit was just the impetus it required. Mauritius may need India more than the other way around but its strategic location, and its dominant Hindu population make it an important cog in the Indian Ocean wheel as far as India is concerned.

The Indian Government, as its current plans clearly indicate, has a major future stake in the Indian Ocean and at the end of Mrs Gandhi's visit one thing was certain. The distance between New Delhi and Port Louis was much closer than the seven hours it took Mrs Gandhi's aircraft to get there.

—DILIP BOBB with RAMESH CHANDRAN in Paris and TEKLALL GUNESH in Port Louis

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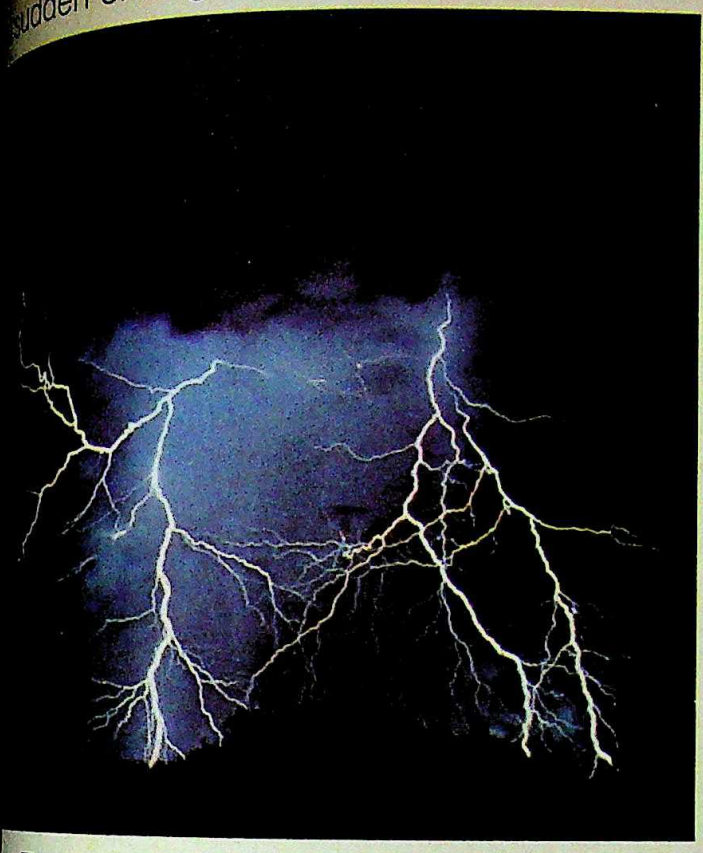

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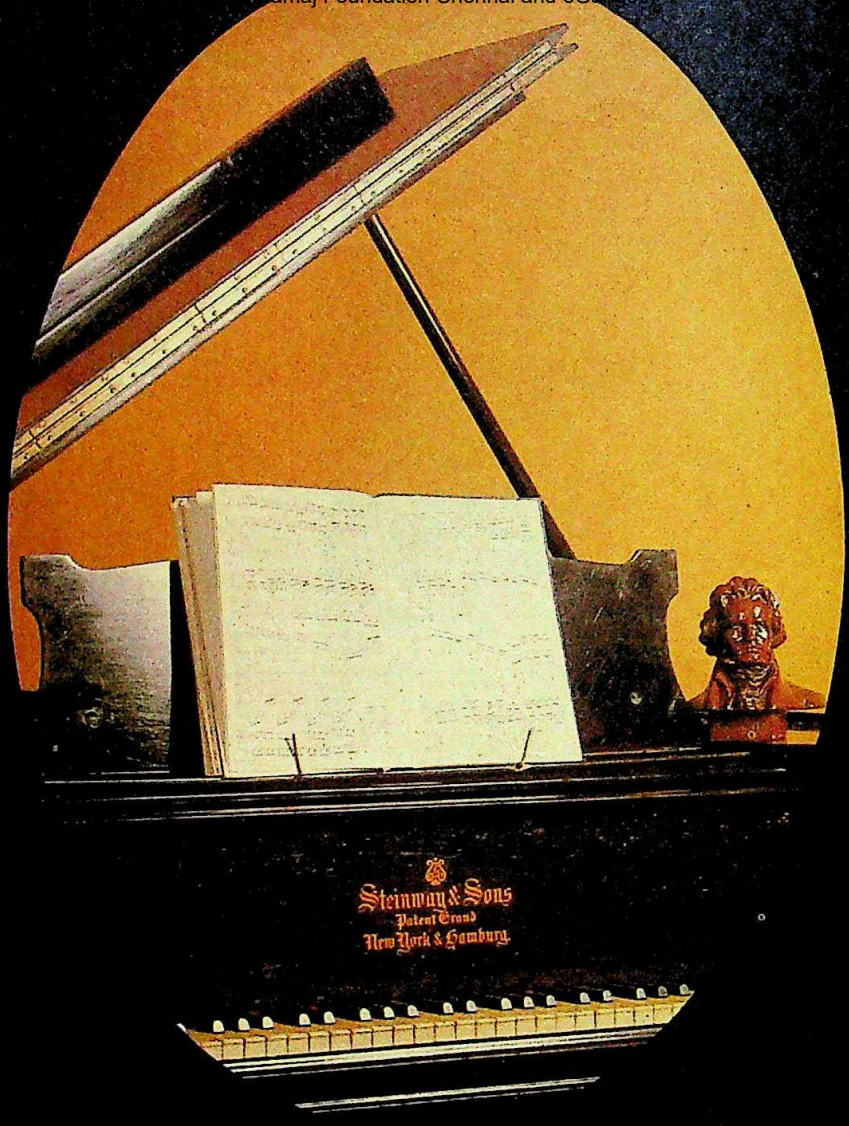

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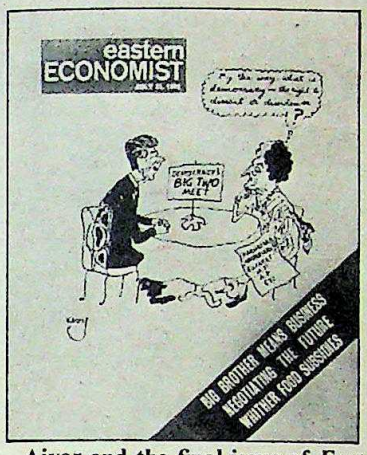
iting On The Wall

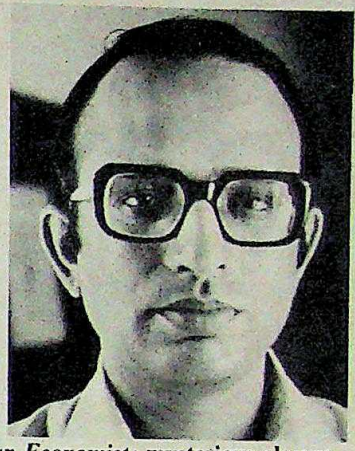
E CLOSURE of the *Eastern Economist*, an- nced without warn- month, created only a in the media world, ble nevertheless. Stru- ling gamely with a cir- of 3,600 in its 40th year ation, the weekly was the pink of health nor runner in the increas- sperous field of eco- journalism. But it has ies of accomplished and among other things arly courageous re- ring the Emergency. magazine was not a alking up a marginal profit of Rs last year. This last was reason enough rise over proprietor M.P. Birla's decision to cease publication.

The first inkling we got of the closure m someone in a sister company," itor Swaminathan S. Aiyar. "I called Calcutta and asked him for a but he said he was not well. I really w why they decided to close."

letter terminating the services of mentions finance as the reason, and dmits with the rising costs the ent have ended in the red this year. year's profits were chalked up with of considerable captive advertising companies (about Rs 1.5 lakh). But could hardly have been a serious since retrenchment payments to have been generous, and far in the paper's financial reserves.

Reasons: There has been some about political pressure, since been consistently critical of both rnment and Mrs Gandhi. But Aiyar believe this: "They tremendous pres- the Emergency to my predecessor, V. anam. But despite they refused. And ed in February 1980, suggested that I be hard-hitting... I politics is the rea- other possible expla- that father-figure expressed some un- about the magazine. formation was avail- and the real reason mystery.





Aiyar and the final issue of *Eastern Economist*: mysterious closure

For all that, the closure of an established journal in a rapidly growing and prosperous field points to clear trends in economic journalism: almost all the older journals, guilty of both dull writing and uninspiring appearance, have been struggling along, while new, more "with it" publications have moved ahead. *Capital*, the country's oldest economic journal, is now 94 years old but claims a (probably exaggerated) circulation of 7,200. The 72-year-old *Commerce* claims only 7,000, while the 33-year-old *Economic and Political Weekly* around 9,000.

In contrast, the four-year-old *Business India* prints 30,000, and *Business World*, started last year, says it sells 15,000. Both these prosperous new publications are creations of the recent boom in glossy magazines: they concentrate not on heavy economic issues but on the world of business, and produce a light package that takes in corporate developments, business gossip and personality-oriented writing.

Successful Package: It is a package which sells. The older publications have relied on libraries, the universities and academics for readership support, but the new publications have boldly priced themselves higher and grabbed the more prosperous and bigger market: company executives, businessmen and decision-makers in Government. Inevitably, advertising has gone where the readers are: *Business India* has a page of advertising for every page of editorial matter, while *Business World* has close to 40 per cent of space taken up by advertising. In contrast, *Commerce*, financially the most successful of the older publications, has an advertisement content of less than 33 per cent, and the *Economic and Political Weekly* a bare 10 per cent.

In another crucial difference, the new business magazines have been backed by purposeful managements, while the older economic journals have not had this essential back-up support. The *Eastern Economist*, for instance, had just four writers in its Delhi headquarters, but eight peons and as many clerical staff. And Aiyar says advertisement support was poor because of poor staffing in the advertisement department.

Nevertheless, the old publications have their bands of faithful readers, presumably since these journals continue to provide basic economic information, analysis and views not found in the new glossies. The *Economic and Political Weekly*, in particular, has carved out a special niche for itself by providing a leftist view of the economy and politics, views that are respected even by those who disagree, and special research articles with a bearing on current issues. Not surprisingly, circulation has grown at a steady 8 per cent annually.

Researched Articles: *Commerce*, similarly, has a reserve of strength in the Commerce Research Bureau, which provides researched articles that are a special selling point. Editor Vadilal Dagli claims that circulation has gone up from 1,500 when he took over in 1967 to 7,000 today. "It isn't true that the new business magazines have affected our sales," he insists.

In Calcutta, *Capital* has been going through its own convulsions, with a recent change in ownership and quick changes in editorship. But circulation, says Editor Jolly Kaul, is rising, though the magazine continues to be in the

The new glossies (left) and their older rivals: clear trends

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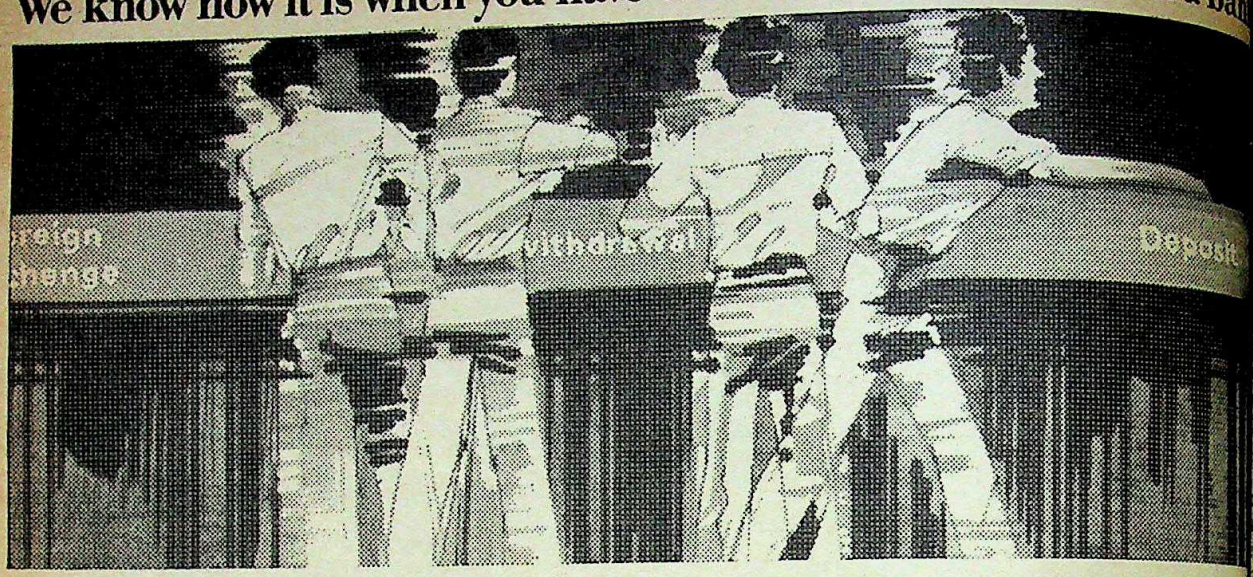

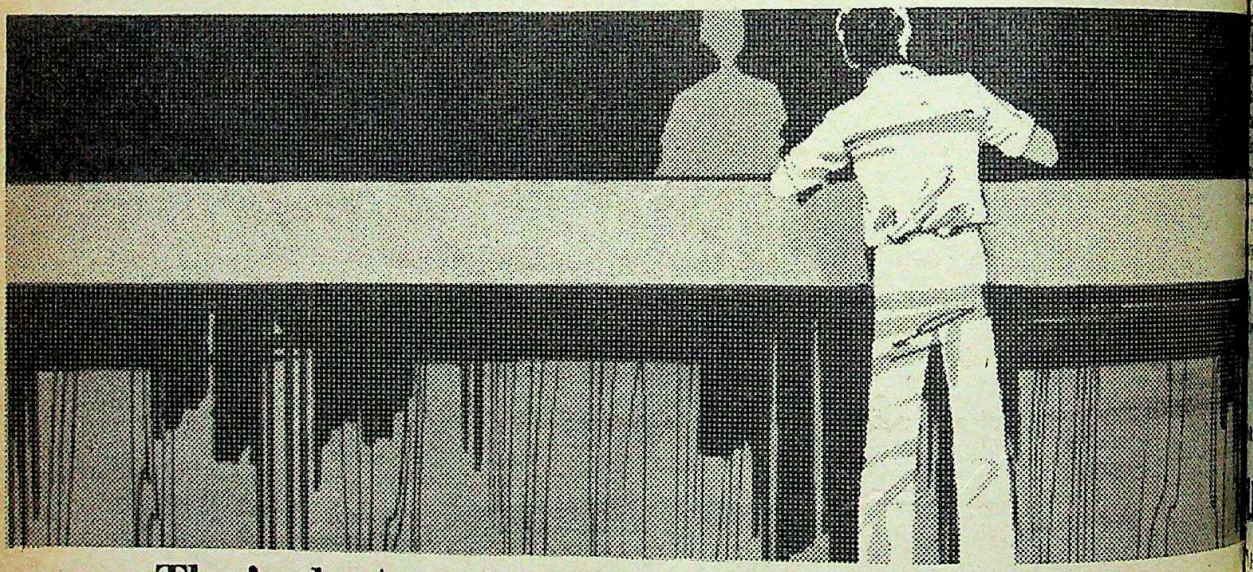

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General Manager Manish Sarkar says: "not just managing."

...ber of the circulation claims are cer... ...exaggerations of the reality, but there ...no doubt that the older journals have an ...ding, if limited, strength in readership ...ing for basic economic journalism. Says ...ther of one of these publications: "As ...than 90 per cent of our readership comes ...ish subscriptions. This gives us some ...ion to fight the new magazines."

...ging Abreast: Nevertheless, the old-...ications now seem to be making an ...ts stay with the changing market. ...ve Editor Dagli says he is now ...ve to the modern photo-typesetting. ...shing efforts at revamping the layout ...ge design. And the magazine has ...ched a sales compaign to try and in... ...culation by 3,000 to 10,000. Insiders ...the *Economic and Political Weekly* ...make some concession to the ...desire for a better looking product. ...essence, however, the new publi... ...have exploited a large market which ...ning journals failed to notice or serve, ...e been unable to dislodge the older ...ions from their market segments, ...ly because those cater to a different ...e. There is clearly room, and need, for ...pes of journals. But given the ob... ...differing levels of prosperity, it is ...which ones will prosper and which ones ...survive, or—like the *Eastern* ...—eventually fold up.

...NAN with CHANDER UDAY SINGH in Bombay and SUMANTA SEN in Calcutta

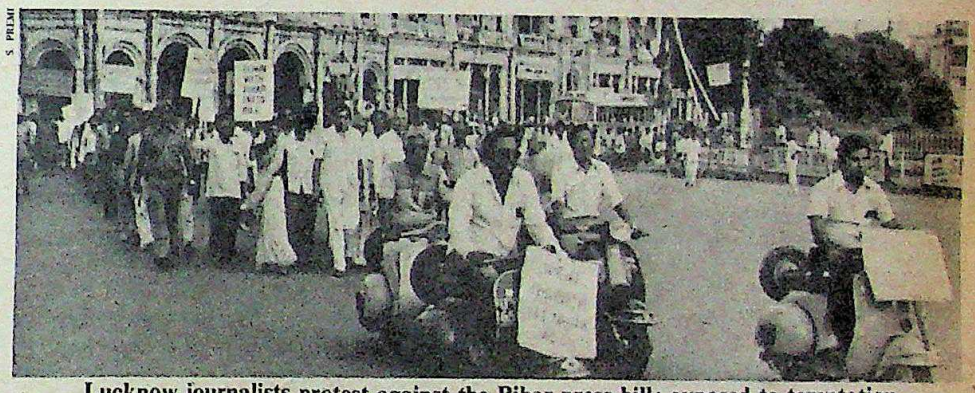
...PRADESH

...ying Time

...HE EYES of newsmen all over India ...re concentrated on Jagannath ...Mishra's sledge-hammer of a bill in ...but what that state government is ...ar trying to do to a battered Fourth ...is being quietly rivalled across the ...n Uttar Pradesh. The powers-that-be ...g money, in what seems to be a con... ...attempt to buy the state's journalists. ...telling example of the Government's ...generosity is a decision in March to ...al 13 cheques of Rs 500 each in favour ...press newsmen. Among the listed ...ees were nine journalists from the ...pital Lucknow, two from Varanasi ...e each from Sitapur and Agra. The ...provoked an uproar and angry ...cornered Kashi Nath Misra, ...minister of state for information, ...mbled something about a ...derstanding" and added that the ...was in no way intended to tamper with the freedom of the press or to blunt its objectivity.

This did not wash with the journalists. Commented Shailesh Kumar, an *Amrit Prabhat* staffer and free-lancer who refused the tainted manna: "It was indisputably an open attempt to corrupt us for reasons too well understood." Says Raj Nath Singh, *Aaj* bureau chief and general secretary of the Press Correspondents Committee: "There can be little doubt about the intentions of the Government to influence the mediamen, especially when aid in cash is given to individuals besides the press organisations."

Big Bill: However, all the state's newsmen are not so virtuous. INDIA TODAY's investigations have revealed that quite a few journalists have not hesitated to avail of the state Government's invitingly open purse. In one instance, the Government, between 1980 and 1982, picked up a Rs 20,000 tab relating to the tours of just five journalists. These include four editors and the Lucknow-based staff correspondent of a leading English newspaper. The Government's guests appear mainly to have gone to Nainital and Almora—both tourist resorts.



S. PRIMI

Lucknow journalists protest against the Bihar press bill: exposed to temptation

Apart from individual journalists, the Government appears to be aiming its lucre at their organisations, a process which started recently. The Uttar Pradesh Working Journalists Union (UPWJU) affiliated to the Indian Federation of Working Journalists (IFWJ) was sanctioned Rs 75,000 for its Faizabad state conference in 1981 by the V.P. Singh government. Similarly, the Uttar Pradesh Journalists Association (UPJA), an affiliate of the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), was given Rs 50,000 for its national conference in Agra the same year in February. The latest proposal is to give Rs 35,000 each to the UPWJU and the UPJA, the two powerful journalist bodies in the state—ostensibly for the development of the two press clubs run by the organisations.

The grants of money for conferences and suchlike are made from the distress relief funds—government officials only remark "no comment" when asked why the funds are being frittered away thus. A.N. Mishra, president of the UPJA, admits that this recent burst of generosity can snowball into "a very dangerous trend and can directly affect our professional objectivity and the freedom of the press". Usman Salahuddin, leader of the rival UPWJU adds: "The general impression about us journalists now is that we are for sale and very cheap."

Appointments: Mishra points out that money is not the only winning card. In 1974 a committee was formed under Upendra Vajpai, a *Hindustan Times* staffer, to suggest relevant reforms which should be carried out by the Information Department: he was paid Rs 2,500 a month for several months to help him suggest the reforms. Lok Dal chief Charan Singh, then leader of the Opposition in the state Assembly, protested vehemently against Vajpai's committee. Earlier, Laxmikant Tiwari of the *Indian Express* and M.B. Mathur of *The Hindustan Times* had been made additional directors-cum-press advisors of the department.

If this goes on, reinforced by the Government's current urge to scatter money around, more and more journalists could very well be seduced into putting on rose-tinted glasses. K. Vikram Rao of *The Times of India* and a member of the IFWJ's national working committee asserts that journalists are, by and large, keeping themselves untainted: for the plenary session of the IFWJ this year in Bangalore in June, says Rao, no assistance was taken from the Government to brighten the journey of the 80 journalists from Uttar Pradesh who attended the session.

But Rao unwittingly exposes a chink in the armour: accepting government patronage for an organisation, according to him, is 'justifiable' provided "it is clear we are not using the institutional status for individual benefit which would be a crime against the profession". Even as the state's journalists pound the streets and typewriters in protest against the 'black' bill in Bihar, they would do well to shore up their own defences.

—ANAND SAGAR

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THE PERFECT SECOND

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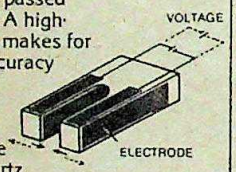

A long spell of work

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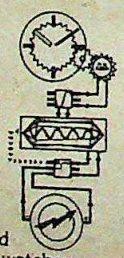

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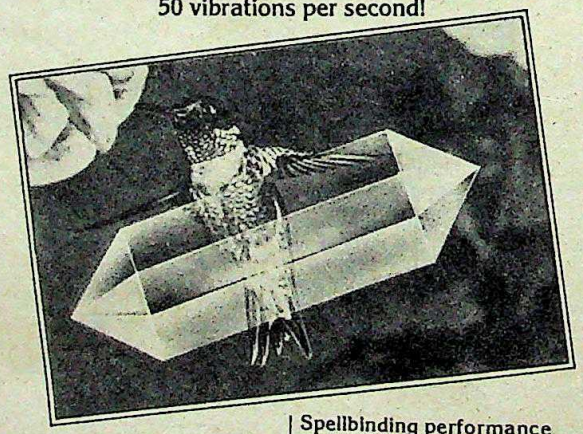

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EUNUCHS

Fear Is The Key

FEAR is their key—to survival. Robbed of their traditional heritage as guardians of royal harems, India's estimated 50,000 eunuchs inhabit a twilight world born out of superstition and fear of the unknown, for that is what they are, and by deliberate design. Apart from their sexual deformity, and their uncanny appearances at weddings and births, very little is known about the tribe and their tightly-controlled existence.

Recently, however, the shroud of secrecy was lifted slightly by the macabre experience of a 15-year-old boy forcibly inducted into a life of eunuchry who managed to escape the clutches of captivity after four terror-filled months.

The boy, Mohammed Hanif Vora, is believed to be the first person to have broken out of the half-world of eunuchs with a first-person account of their lives, their brutal tribal rites and the hierarchical system under which they ply their bizarre trade.

Vora's horror story offers a major clue as to how the eunuchs maintain their numbers, despite the fact that they are doomed by choice to remain childless. A minor family quarrel forced Vora to run away from his home in Chotta Udepur and he arrived in Baroda, in search of a job. He found employment carting around a water trolley in the streets but no friends till a couple of eunuchs started conversing with the boy regularly and eventually gained his confidence. After about a month, they made their move. One night, last April, he was grabbed by the two eunuchs, pushed into an auto-rickshaw and taken to a suburban area where he was locked up in a room.

Tuition: For an entire week, he was kept locked up and beaten regularly to instil a fear complex to prevent him from attempting to escape. After satisfying themselves that Vora was suitably terrified of retribution, he was given feminine garments and started accompanying the eunuchs on their rounds. For three months, he was part of the group and taught how to behave like them, the seductive walk, the obscene gestures and the ritualistic hand-clapping peculiar to the tribe.

Vora was jealously guarded in the initial days though treated like a prize possession with each eunuch vying for his attention. Often, jealous quarrels would break out between them for him. The group that Vora was with travelled from village to village and made good money by their presence at weddings and births. The simple-minded villagers actually considered them a sign of good fortune and paid them handsomely for their presence.

The group, which consisted of around a dozen members, earned an incredible Rs 40,000 in just one month of touring the rural areas. However, each group had its own territory and strictly adhered to their own peculiar code of ethics and territorial boundaries. But Gujarat, according to reliable estimates, has around 2,000 eunuchs so the villages were largely untapped areas of exploitation. Throughout the three months of wandering, the eunuchs gave Vora no chance for escape and he was never left on his own. Finally satisfied with his performance, they decided that he was ripe for initiation and the real nightmare began. One night he was taken by three members of the group in a taxi to Kalol, 140 km away, on the pretext that they were going to visit relatives. There he was lodged in the house of an old woman who obviously knew the eunuchs well.

Initiation Rite: According to Vora's later statement, he was roughly woken the next morning by four eunuchs who stripped off his clothes and held him down on the floor. A man and an old woman then entered the room, the latter bearing a wicked-looking dagger. To drown the boy's shrieks of pain, a cassette player was switched on at full volume. The initiation rite was mercifully brief. In one swift stroke, the old woman sliced off the boy's sexual organs and he passed out.

Vora regained consciousness sometime later in excruciating agony in his abdomen as the urethra became blocked by the rapidly healing skin. Worse was to follow. He was tied to the cot with his legs spread apart

The boy, Mohammad Hanif Vora, is believed to be the first person to have broken out of the half-world of eunuchs with a first-person account of their lives, their brutal tribal rites and the hierarchical system under which they ply their bizarre trade.

Vora: living through a night

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resting on two earthen pots. One of unuchs, Lilade, whose house it was, cked him brutally in the groin, tearing dra open. A neem twig was forced the tiny opening which was later by a syringe containing some liquid. He was then taken back to in a taxi, to what is locally known as alli (Eunuch Lane).

r two months, he was unable to He was well cared for but closely Even his occasional trips to the were in the company of two tough eunuchs. On one occasion, the lapsed and he slipped out of the but his feminine clothes gained him mpathy from the locality and he was rounded up and taken back and beaten From then on, the security was ened.

r the next month, he joined the in their itinerant existence wander- bazaars of Baroda, har- shopkeepers till they with money, or attending ngs and births where he the star performer in their ic dances. He discover- the eunuchs had a reli- network of informers servants and wandering who would tell them of gs in the offing. The dates were carefully nd nine months later to they would return to ase where the wedding ken place to demand mand of financial flesh.

LATE July, Vora finally ised that he had gained confidence of the group ir security around him erceptibly relaxed. He d to escape at the first available unity which was not late in coming. y 20, he had gone with the eunuchs ay's bustling main vegetable market. the group's attention was occupied reading their way through the jostling Vora spotted a vacant auto- and waved him to stop. Before the were aware of his intentions, he had into the scooter and sped off to the agar railway station. Paying off the th money he had carefully hoarded m his "earnings", he bought a to his hometown, Chotta Udepur, 60 ay.

was not till he arrived, still wearing ful sari and blouse, that Vora finally that he was free from the nightmare enveloped him for almost four But it was still not over. Recognised by childhood friends, despite his long hair and feminine dress, he was followed home with obscene taunts and catcalls till finally, to escape from this new threat, he dived into a police station and tearfully blurted out his sorry tale to an astonished policeman. The police called in his incredulous parents who had given the boy up for lost.

Next morning, the boy was taken by the police to Baroda to have the case registered with the police station in whose jurisdiction the original kidnapping had taken place. Two senior police officers then rushed to Kalol to arrest the three people named in Vora's complaint as having performed the castration. Another posse of policemen were taken by Vora to Lilade's house, where he had been held captive. In Kalol, police arrested Hiraben Thakrada, the 60-year-old woman who had performed the actual castration but in Baroda, a public furore regarding the crackdown on eunuchs in Hijra Gali stalled police action for three days before the arrests could be made. The arrests included the 'Guru' of the eunuchs, Kanta Kunwar alias Kantilal Patel, 60, and five others. Kanta's interrogation provided some further insight into how the eunuchs operated and their tribal structure. The Guru is acknowledged as the head of the "family" and is obeyed as such. Every eunuch after attaining a certain amount of experience, is required to "adopt" a member in the manner in which Vora was "adopted". Vora's foster parent was Anoop Kunwar alias Noor Mohammed who had been originally "adopted" by the Guru himself.

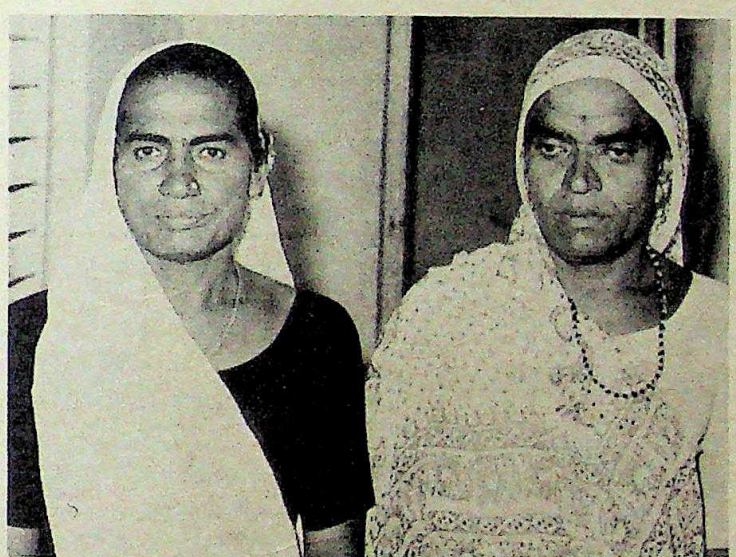
Interrogation: According to the story that unravelled, the Guru was the high priest or earthly representative of the goddess of the eunuchs, Bahucharaji. Kunwar claimed that only those young boys were "adopted" on whom the goddess chose to "caste her shadow" though what exactly he meant by that Kunwar failed to explain adequately. He insisted that all the boys joined the cult at the "express command" of the goddess. He also insisted that Vora had joined the cult of his own free will and there was no question of coercion or torture. Under interrogation, Hirabai admitted to having performed the castration on Vora but claimed that the boy had willingly submitted to the operation. She refused to admit to how many similar castrations she had performed.

Meanwhile, three of the arrested eunuchs were taken to a hospital for medical examination. The examination revealed that the male sexual organs had been removed by crude methods though the eunuchs told the doctors that their genitals had "fallen off because the Mata had commanded them to". The three were released since there were no specific charges but five of the six named in Vora's complaint have been kept in custody, including Hirabai.

By last fortnight, interest in the case had heightened as the preliminary hearing for the case was fixed for later this month. Police Commissioner R. Sibal says that all five suspects have confessed to being present when the boy was castrated but stubbornly insist that he willingly permitted the operation. Vora, the young victim, vehemently asserts that he was lured into their clutches and forced to submit to the castration. In any event, the accused eunuchs are likely to be charged under Section 307 (attempt to murder) and Section 326 (attempt to cause grievous injuries) according to Sibal.

The case is certain to have a major effect on the 400-odd eunuchs ensconced in Baroda's Hijra Gali. The accused have spared no expense in hiring top-notch local lawyers to fight the case which could result in some more unpalatable exposures regarding their closely-guarded methods of operation, methods that have already destroyed the life of young Vora. As his father Musabhai Vora says: "My son's life is ruined but his plight might prevent further acts of brutality on hundreds of other young boys." That is still to be seen, but in Baroda city, the case has certainly resulted not only in a drop in sympathy for the eunuchs but also in a corresponding increase in the fear psychosis that shrouds them in mystery. Hopefully, the evidence of a 15-year-old will be able to rip apart some of the superstition and reveal the truth beneath.

—DILIP BOBB with C.J. PATEL in Baroda



Two of the arrested eunuchs: brutal initiation rites

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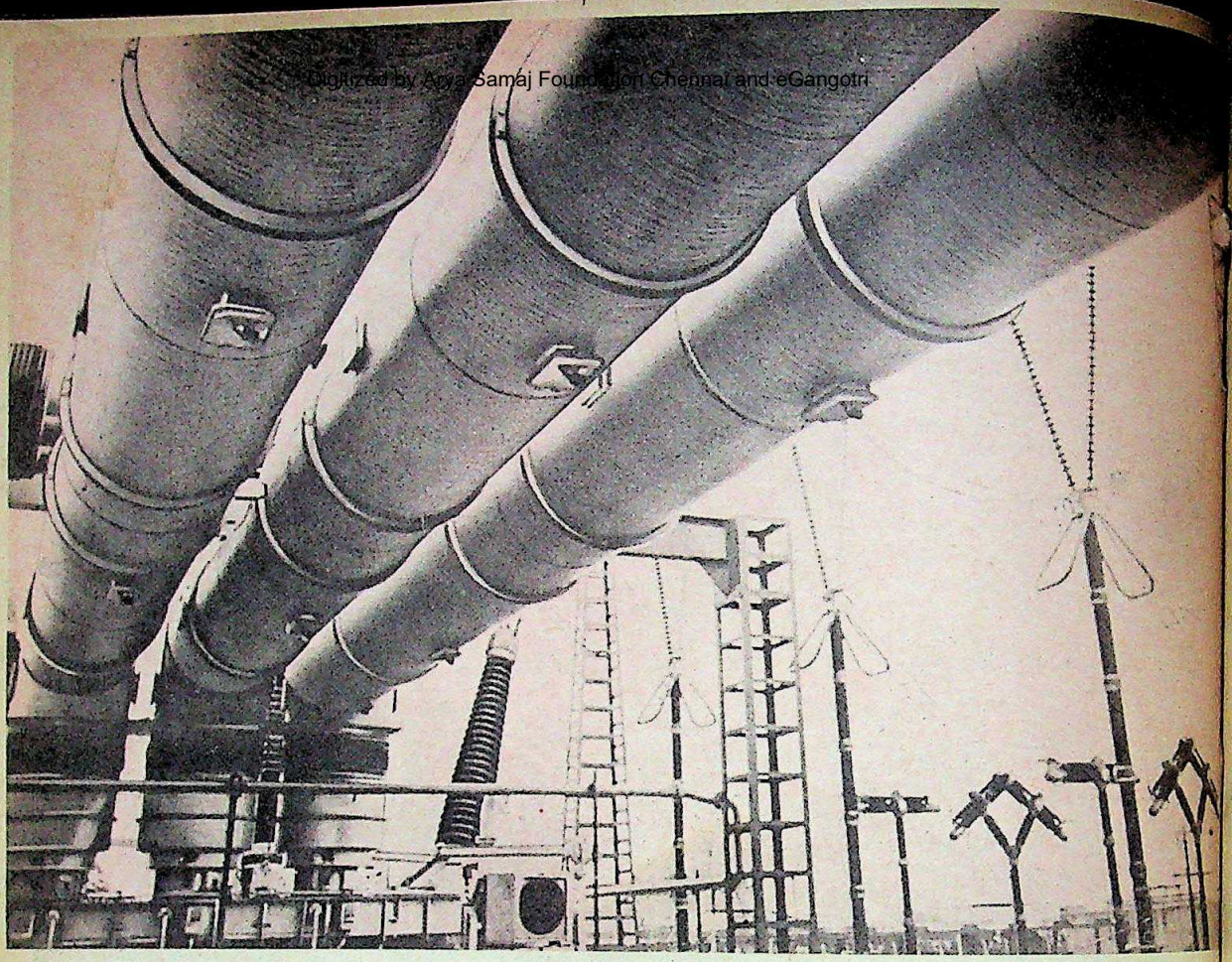

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WEST ASIA

An Ominous Future

THE ART of statesmanship, Charles de Gaulle once remarked, is to understand the trend of history. What will be the trend of history in the strategically vital Middle East with the passing of the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) from West Beirut? At this moment, the future may seem to be more kaleidoscopic than illuminating. But Middle Eastern political alignments must change significantly with the Israeli military victory in Lebanon.

The Arab states have virtually cooperated with Israel and the United States to eliminate the PLO as the Arab world's only populist-radical actor. American diplomacy backed by Israeli military might has reduced the PLO as an organised fighting force for quite some time to come; the Palestinian nation has become the Palestinian Diaspora. In the years immediately ahead, a major realignment of forces in the Middle East will test and challenge American leadership.

Now that the PLO has been reduced to a shambles, the majority of the Arab regimes in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf will be willing to collaborate with the US if the Reagan Administration seriously addresses itself to the task of a comprehensive peace settlement between the Arabs and Israel.

Arafat, Reagan and Begin: testing time ahead

If the US fails to use the opportunities created by the dispersal of the PLO army from Lebanon to bring about a comprehensive settlement of the Middle Eastern issues, the new alignment will break up, and the region will invite a conflict between Israel and the Arab masses some time in the not-too-distant future. Because even in its darkest hour, the PLO has blazed a trail which may one day inflame the Arab people and burn down not only Israel, but also the Arab regimes that looked away for 75 days in the summer of 1982 as Israeli troops and American weapons made a rubble of West Beirut.

Arab Betrayal: The immediate impact of the PLO's defeat, however, will be very different. The frontiers between the so-called moderate and radical Arab states virtually disappeared during the Israel-PLO war: the vast majority of the 21 Arab countries that belong to the Arab League clubbed together to allow Arafat's shadow Palestinian regime to collapse.

How differently many of these countries had reacted when 50,000 Iranian troops crossed into Iraq in the second week of High anxiety swept the oilfields of the Persian Gulf, from ric ing Kuwait to Saudi Arabia; observations made by A electronic surveillance planes with the help of satellite were pooled to clear the haze of rhetoric obscuring the Money poured into Baghdad from the oil-rich Arab Gover while Jordan and Egypt sent volunteers to fight with the I

But not a single Arab regime itself, even as the 8,000 guerrillas of doggedly resisted the mighty Isra machine for 75 days. And when they agreed to offer hospitality to the PLO men evacuated from Lebanon Arab country took great care to ta the minimum and from its own point the least dangerous elements. The regimes, then, have made it clear t Islamic revolution in Iran is a greater to them than Israel, and the Iran-Ira has posed far greater danger to the lity—even survival—than the war

the PLO and Israe

Now that has been reduce shambles, the ma the Arab regime Middle East and sian Gulf will ing to collabora the US if the Administration addresses itself task of a compre peace settlement the Arabs and

Even if Algeria and Libya stand aside, most of the other Ar may now subscribe to the Camp David Accord if Israe political autonomy to the 2 million Palestinians living on Bank and Gaza, thereby creating the foundations of an Palestinian state.

Concerted Effort: The Arab regimes will expect the States to persuade or compel Israel to meet the Palestinian half way. Whether the US will be able to make Israel fall however, a very different question. In Lebanon, the fun objectives of Israel and the Reagan Administration—nam ination of the PLO as a threat to the Jewish state—converge powers acted in tandem, despite some frowns on Reagan's

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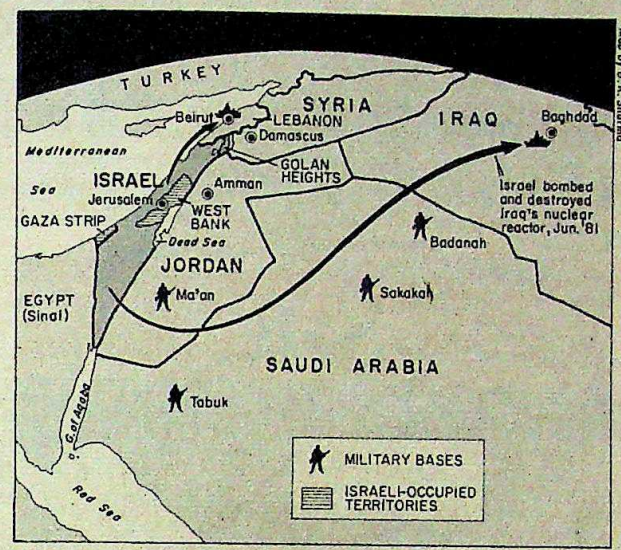
certain brutal Israeli military actions. Throughout the war, House remained on Dear-Menachem-Your-Friend-Ron with Israel. Apart from indefinite suspension of the supply of bombs to Israel, Reagan's much publicised displeasure with found no expression in action.



invading Lebanon and con- a ruthless war for 75 days a few thousand guerrillas of Israel might have fallen in the the world, driven European ments to anger and lost the rt of sections of the American and even some American Jews. continued to obtain the full atic, political and strategic of the Reagan Administra- without which it could not have victory—one that proved to be ssly than anyone in Israel was ed for.

s not at all certain, however, the US can or will compel el to concede to the Palesti- even the rudiments of a national Israel is helplessly dependent on American funds and ; only by threatening to cut off supplies of both can gton force Israel to follow its leadership in building a regime aged at Camp David in the Middle East. The Reagan Admi- on will not even consider such a punishment, certainly not in 4, which is America's election season! In fact, Israeli defiance erican wishes and policy preferences has never cost the Jewish drop in US military and economic aid even though the last s have witnessed many strains in Israeli-American relations. the last 14 months alone, Israel bombed and destroyed Iraq's reactor, bombarded the Palestinian quarter of Beirut, the Golan Heights, established new settlements on the West dismissed elected Arab mayors there and in Gaza, demolished ding in southern Sinai before handing the territory back to and finally invaded Lebanon on June 6 and reduced West to rubble—all against American wishes and advice! And this five-year period, the US extended Israel $9.8 billion in and $4.7 billion in economic aid. Gripped by a fever of nationalism, the Israelis may even threaten to stand on their and pursue their own policies and dare the White House to military and economic aid.

first quarrel between Israel and the US may break out over re of Lebanon. If Israel insists on keeping its military e in Lebanon until a "strong" government headed by a Christian leader has been imposed on that country, reducing puppet of the Jewish state, the United States will be torn its obligations to the Arab regimes that have helped in the on of the PLO and its loyalty to Israel.

Syria refuses to pull out its 35,000 troops from Lebanon till ne as the latter's political character has been determined, and raeli guns now trained on Damascus are ordered to fire, what e role of the US in the next Middle East war? Will America at an Israeli victory over Syria as it has connived at the Israeli over the PLO? In that event, there will be no Camp David- gime in the Middle East, but an Israeli regime maintained by military might—and it will be an invitation to an eventual war n Israel and the Arab people who outnumber the population el 40 to 1.

ian Factor: American opportunities in the Middle East in ce of the PLO's dispersal from Lebanon are all the more promising because the Soviet Union has lost all clout in the region by its inability or unwillingness to come to the help of the PLO. The Soviets are seized by a Sadat complex; they haven't recovered from the shock of Sadat's expulsion of thousands of Russians from Egypt in 1972 and his renunciation of all debts to the Soviet Union. As the Soviet leaders scan the Middle East in the summer of 1982, they cannot identify a single reliable ally or friend.

The Arab national liberation movement lies prostrate. Even Syria had to work out with the US—along with Saudi Arabia and Egypt—the modalities of the PLO evacuation from West Beirut. It can be predicted with certainty that the Soviet Union will not rush to Syria's defence should Israel invade Syria now or in the near future. Only in the event of an American invasion of Iran will the Kremlin invoke the Soviet-Iranian treaty of 1921 and march its troops into northern Iran, taking at least the province of Azerbaijan.

Comprehensive Review: The imminent realignment of forces in the Middle East poses pressing foreign policy questions for India, because India's security as well as economic prospects are strongly tied up with that region. Mrs Gandhi made this point clear repeatedly during her recent tour of the US. She remonstrated with the Reagan Administration for not doing enough to leash the Israeli war machine in Lebanon. But now that the PLO is no longer what it used to be, Mrs Gandhi has ordered a comprehensive review of the Middle East situation created by the Israeli victory in Lebanon, and is said to be thinking of summoning Indian envoys from the region, as well as the Persian Gulf, to a conference in New Delhi shortly.

The prime minister's talks with the Soviet leaders will doubtless cover the Middle East, giving her an insight into Soviet opportunities—or lack of them—in the region as well as Soviet foreign policy strategic thinking. Nobody in the External Affairs Ministry is in a position to talk about India's Middle East policy with any clarity of vision at this point of time. The burden of officials' response to questions is: Let's wait for the prime minister's visit to Moscow and for the situation to clear up a little. Even so, it is conceded by officials in private conversation that India will now have to work with the 'moderate' Arab states, because moderation is likely to be the wave in the Middle East in the wake of the PLO's defeat

India's Options: According to one line of thinking in South Block, it would do India no good to be more anti-Israeli than the majority of the Arab states. On the contrary, India should do whatever it can to promote a comprehensive Middle Eastern settlement on the basis of Arab recognition of Israel's right to exist within secure frontiers, with Israel agreeing to grant political autonomy to the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

If cooperating with moderate states like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait (and perhaps Syria and Iraq in the post-Lebanon situation) means in effect working for or with an American-sponsored and US-supported regime in the Middle East, India should not shrink from it, for the simple reason that the Soviet Union is incapable of playing a significant role in the region now and will remain so for some years to come. India's main interests in the Middle East are: assured supply of oil and increasing trade and economic relations with the Arab states. Cooperation with the moderate Arab states may be unavoidable, and profitable, for India if it is placed by chance to formally lead the nonaligned movement

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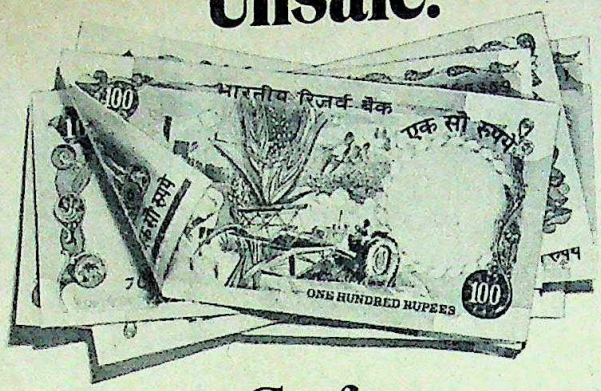

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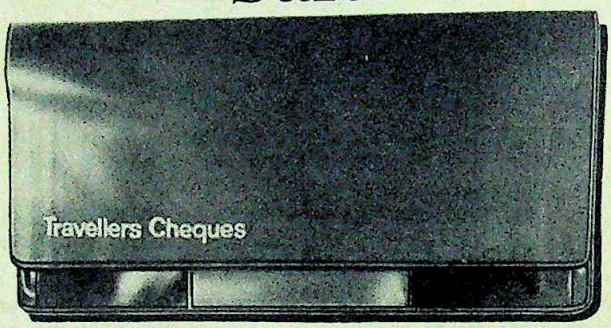

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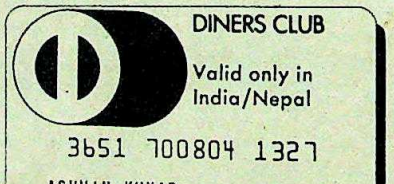

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THE GRAIN DRAIN

THE RECENT rains all over the country have saved the Government the embarrassment of asking the US Government for soft loans to finance large-scale food imports. A loan request was very much on the cards when imports of up to 5 million tonnes were being considered. This would have cost the equivalent of Rs 1,000 crore in foreign exchange, money which simply isn't there for this purpose. The revival of the monsoon, however, has helped the Government scale down import requirements to 2.5 million tonnes—which is being paid for commercially. Even this will cost Rs 500 crore, not a small sum when foreign exchange reserves have already dropped by around Rs 900 crore so far this year. The wheat imports could well throw the Government's foreign exchange budgeting out of gear for the second year running. Last year, the drop in foreign exchange reserves had been larger than envisaged under the IMF loan programme.

TRUCKING BOOM

HE BIRLAS, traditionally stragglers in the field of trucks and commercial vehicles, have joined the rush for establishing new capacity in this booming field. The group's Hindustan Motors recently acquired a licence to assemble 9,500 trucks, at a new site to be located in Gujarat. No new foreign collaboration is, however, proposed. The two leading truck producers, Telco and Ashok Leyland, are already well into major expansion programmes, while new entrants will soon be flooding the field with light commercial vehicles. The DCM tie-up with Toyota is through, and similar projects are planned by the Eicher group, Hyderabad Allwyn and the Punjab Industrial Development Corporation.

BINGING ON IRON

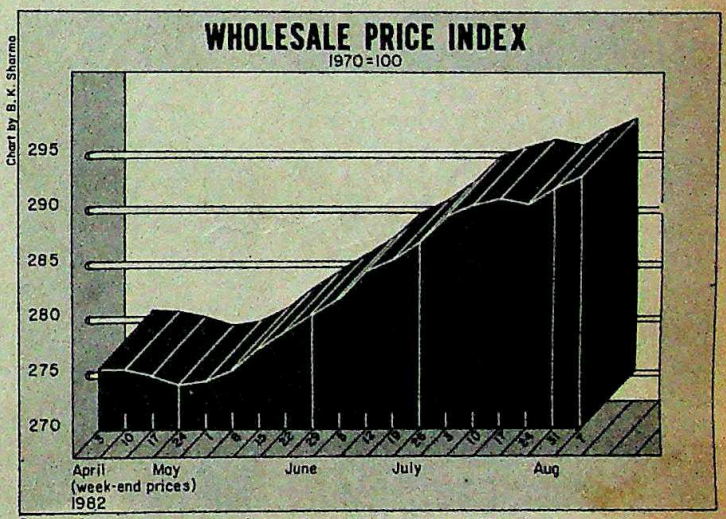
THE RUSH into truck manufacture is matched by the scramble for licences to produce sponge iron, using the relatively new direct reduction process. A number of large industrial houses and state industrial development corporations see sponge iron as a profitable way to get into the steel industry, and the government is obviously encouraging them through progressive relaxations of the licensing policy in this field. Official policy was at one stage to be in favour of joint sector projects. More recently, however, there have been indications that the Government would be willing to let private companies go ahead on their own. The Tatas already have a stake in a joint venture sponge iron project in Orissa, while the Modis have moved into a joint venture in Andhra. Now the Birlas have entered the race, with a plant proposed to be set up in Andhra Pradesh. Mukand Iron of Bombay is another big name in the field, as is the Poddar group of Calcutta. Two others who have applied for licences are the Gujarat Industrial Investment Corporation and the State Industrial Corporation of Maharashtra (SICOM). There are yet others waiting in the wings.

FOOTROUTE POLITICS

AMETHI, Rajiv Gandhi's Lok Sabha constituency, may be about to get a fertiliser plant, one of the six that are to be set up to make use of natural gas from Bombay High. It appears little sense to locate such a plant halfway across Uttar since the gas will have to be carried by pipeline all the way the western coast. But this wasteful spending of economic presumably going to yield ample political capital for the minister's son. If Amethi does get selected, it will cost an Rs 100 crore to extend the pipeline eastward: an invest- about Rs 1,500 for every vote in Amethi. The strange part of is that Amethi's residents will get little benefit from the most of the jobs will go to qualified outsiders.

RISING TRENDS

THE PRICE rise continues relentlessly. By August 7, the official wholesale price index had reached 293.1, a rise of 6.4 per cent in the 15 weeks since the latest inflationary bout began. This represents an annual inflation rate of over 23 per cent. Other price indices have been as merciless: the consumer price index



for urban non-manual employees rested at 433 in June, 8 per cent higher than a year earlier; the consumer price index for industrial workers was even higher at 470, a rise of more than 7 per cent over June 1981. Though these single-digit figures are by no means alarming, they nevertheless get across the stark message of a sizeable price rise for the fourth year running.

COLOUR BLIND

THE EXPECTED scramble for colour television sets has not, alas, materialised. Several reasons are given for this unexpected development. One is that the demand estimates—and there are several—are vastly exaggerated, bearing little relation to the consumer's purchasing power. Another is that the price has been fixed too high for there to be any great enthusiasm in the market-place. And a third is that no one is interested in buying sets fitted with South Korean picture tubes and other vital components. The catch is that the Korean kit cannot be used with video cassette recorders. The initial expectation among consumers had been that the sets would have either Japanese or German components, but no one had heard of Samsung of Korea, one of the favoured suppliers. Which of these is the real reason is anybody's guess, but the manufacturers are hoping that demand will pick up once the Asiad fever catches on.

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RECESSION

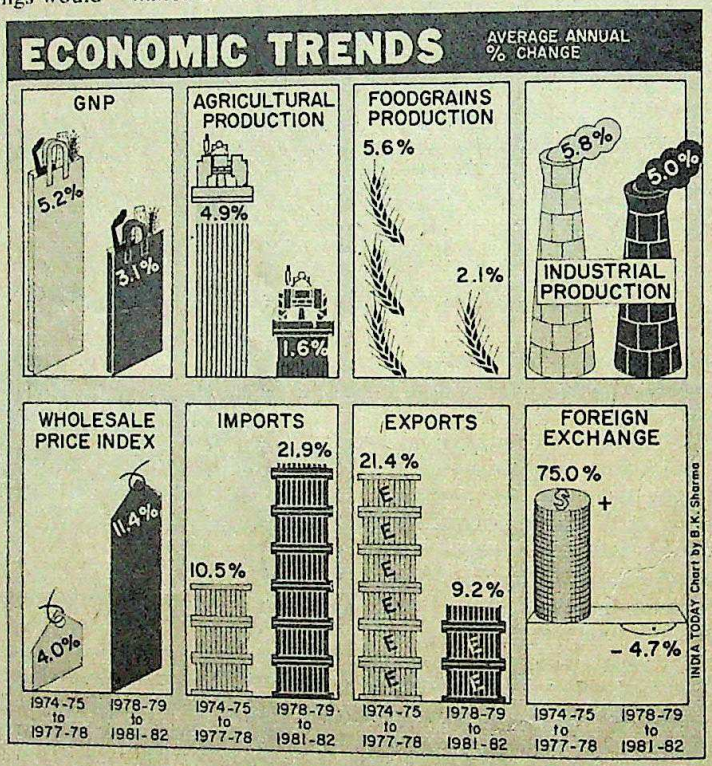
Crying Wolf

EVERY time there is a recession or a slight falling off in the industrial growth rate, there is a hue and cry throughout the corporate world, as though the world was coming to an end. Worse still, most businessmen have convinced themselves that the current recession is a result of the Government's credit squeeze, without asking why the Government should have clamped a squeeze in the year of productivity in the first place. Most businessmen also believe that things would improve substantially if the Government were not so tight-fisted with money. They may be right—but only up to a point. The fact remains, however, that the authorities have been compelled to slow down an economy that was already showing signs of being overheated, and a credit squeeze has traditionally been an effective instrument for cooling.

Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee said in April (INDIA TODAY, April 30, 1982) that inflation had not spent itself and that he did not agree with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and other business lobbies that recession, not inflation, was the main danger. Unfortunately, neither he nor his officials have been able to make out an effective case for their stand, and the case has therefore gone largely by default. Nevertheless, there is strong evidence that the economy has been steadily slowing down during the last few years, the slowdown being temporarily masked by raging inflation.

Contrasts: Take the last eight years and divide them into two four-year periods (1974–75 to 1977–78 and 1978–79 to 1981–82). They cover the Emergency years and the Janata period, along with the first two years of the current Congress(I) regime. Yet the differences between the two periods are striking. The average rate of growth of gross national product (GNP) has come down sharply from 5.2 per cent per year in the first half to 3.1 per cent in the second half—a drop of nearly 40 per cent. The fall in the agricultural output rates has been even more precipitous—from 4.9 per cent to 1.6 per cent per year, that is, by more than two-thirds.

In the case of foodgrains, the average rate has declined from 5.6 per cent to 2.1 per cent per year. This is apparent from the actual figures of foodgrains production. The foodgrains output increased from nearly 100 million tonnes in 1974–75 to 126.4 million tonnes in 1977–78. There was a rise of about 5 million tonnes in the following year; but since then it has been marking time and though last year (1981–82) was supposed to have been a good year, the output is estimated at no more than 2 or 3 million tonnes above the 1977–78 level.



Growth Rates: There has, however, been no comparative slowdown in the industrial sector which seems to maintain its own momentum. During the first half of the period, the average industrial output rate was 5.8 per cent a year; during the second half, it was slightly less at 5 per cent a year, which is not much of a fall, considering the relatively rapid decline in the farm sector. However, the two sectors are not all that independent. In fact, farm output accounts for more than 40 per cent of GNP and sets the pace for the rest of the economy, including the industrial sector. If, therefore, there has been no setback in industrial output, it must be because of artificial demand created by pumping money into the economy—that is, through inflation—and/or increased imports.

This is precisely what seems to have happened. The wholesale price index rose nearly threefold, from an average of 4 per cent per year during the first half to 11 per cent per year in the second half. Imports also went up from an average of 10.5 per cent in the first half to 21.9 per cent in the second half. The net result was a sharp fall in the export rate—from 21.4 per cent to 9.2 per cent—and a much sharper fall in foreign exchange reserves—from 75.0 per cent in the first half to 4.7 per cent a year in the second half.

The country has had to pay a high price for maintaining industrial growth above the compatible level—compatible, that is, with the rate of agricultural output. It could be done by stepping up imports (increasing imports of foodstuffs and vegetable oils), slowing down exports and, of course, pumping money into the economy to maintain demand over and above what may be considered a 'natural' demand level in keeping with agricultural production. The 'natural' rate of industrial production, compatible with the farm output rate of 1.6 per cent a year, may be of the order of 3 to 3.5 per cent. Instead we have had a growth rate of 5 per cent which is obviously well above the 'natural' rate.

Agricultural L...

Businessmen, of course, are prepared to accept a ... rate of industrial growth ... believe that money in the ... ket, or credit, are the ... factors which ultimately ... the level of demand. Hence ... frantic pleas of FICCI to ... deficit financing, even ... ultimately most of this paper money ... into inflation and only a small part ... production. The fact is that the real ... industrial growth in this country is ... level of bank credit, but the level of ... output. We are still an agricultural ... and when the farm sector slows down ... has obviously done over the last few ... it slows down everything else with it, ... ing industry, commerce and trade, ... including, of course, imports and exports.

To assume that industry can ... regardless of what happens in the farm ... is to ignore the realities of the situation. ... industrial sector is forced to adjust ... the limitations imposed by the slowdown ... the farm front, and it can do so ... cutting down on its ...

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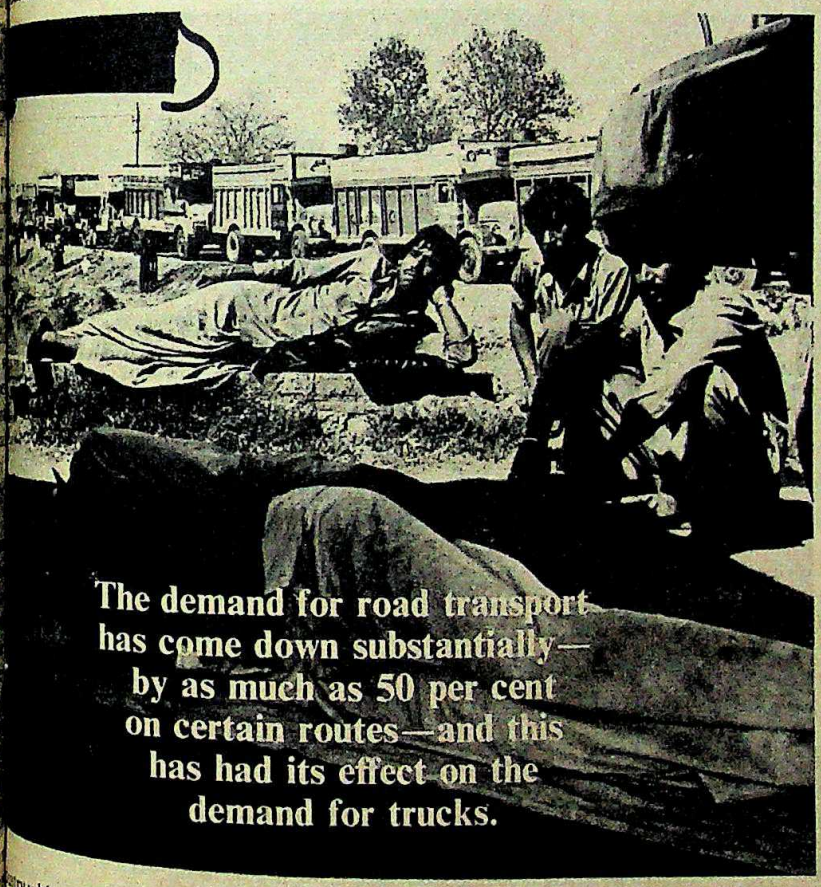
...that is, through recession. The cur-...ession is thus a part of the adjustment ...hat has been long overdue. The ...overe has followed the adjustment, ...other way around.

...ART from this major structural ad-...stment in the economy brought ...about by the increasing constraint ...growth of the farm sector, there are ...inor but no less important adjust-...taking place at different levels and ...industries. When a sector shrinks in ...new demand-supply equation comes ...ing which affects the several compet-...in different ways.

...eration: Take the truck manufactur-



The demand for road transport has come down substantially—by as much as 50 per cent on certain routes—and this has had its effect on the demand for trucks.

...stry which has been growing rapidly ...th annual growth rates in the range ...5 per cent. The growth spree seems ...sted only while the going was good, ...ile the railways remained mired in ...ficiency. For some reason, the rail-...m to have perked up their working ...ed 25 million tonnes more of freight ...2 than in the preceding year. This ...erformance has apparently enabled ...ays to make considerable inroads ...e otherwise carried by trucks. ...the first time in six years, the ...have been able to reach their own ...els. There are reports that the quality of the rail service has also improved and this has also been a factor in the diversion of traffic from road to rail. The net result is that the demand for road transport has come down substantially—by as much as 50 per cent on certain routes—and this has had its effect on the demand for trucks.

In any case, a good deal of the demand for road transport stemmed from the failure of the railways to deliver the goods, literally. Time was when coal used to be delivered in Delhi by truck directly from Bihar coalfields. Until recently, a large number of cotton mills in Ahmedabad also received coal supplies by road from Madhya Pradesh coalfields. This was obviously an aberration. All this has now stopped, for coal production as well as rail transport have improved substantially during the past year or so, and the truck operators are probably crying 'recession'. But this is no recession in the real sense of the term, for, from the angle of national interest as well as energy economics, rail transport is preferable to road transport—particularly over the longer haul—and the railways are now back in their natural element.

Artificial Demand: In conditions of scarcity or paucity of supplies, not all demands can be said to be legitimate. Take the case of diesel generating sets (captive sets) which nearly every industrial establishment has been compelled to set up to supplement irregular power supply from state electricity boards. The demand for such sets is so substantial that many companies including General Electric and Kirloskar have established special units to cater to new business.

Assume, for the sake of argument, that like in the case of the railways there is appreciable improvement in the volume as well as the quality of supply from the state electricity boards, so that there is no further need for diesel sets. Kirloskar and General Electric will have their business pulled out from under their feet. But will they be justified in crying 'Recession! Recession!' when all that has happened is that there is just no further need for their services? The demand will have merely switched back to the state electricity boards, whose responsibility it should have been in any case. It was basically an artificial demand that was created, just as the demand for trucks to carry coal from Bihar and Madhya Pradesh coalfields.

Correct Diagnosis: All such demands remain 'legitimate' as long as there is no change in the situation which gave rise to them in the first place. Inflation is also a special situation; and once the Government decides that it is unacceptable, as Pranab Mukherjee obviously believes, it is only a matter of time before such demands are jettisoned. When the Government should leave inflation untouched in order to keep industry happy is a political, not an economic, question and can be decided only at a political level. New Delhi has evidently decided that, in the short term at least, inflation is more injurious than disgruntled businessmen, although the latter too have their point. It is only through trial and error that the economic managers can discover for themselves which demands are compatible and which are not, and act accordingly.

This kind of trial and error method is obviously also being applied to the textile industry in Bombay. For years the Government simply took over the sick mills when they turned sick, without realising that many had become sick as there was virtually no demand for their products. Over a 100 cotton mills have been closed in Bombay for the last seven months but the shutdown has had no effect whatsoever on the textile supply situation. It is possible that a majority of the mills are defunct and can be scrapped and that the rest can be modernized to fill the breach. It is a painful process of attrition—but a most essential one—as otherwise the industry will continue to carry a lot of useless junk. A recession is often as useful and necessary as a boom: for only when you are ill do you call a doctor to look you over and keep a tag on your minor as well as major ailments.

—JAY DUBASHI

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DETERGENTS

A Soapy Scrap

THE SALESGIRL distributing packets of washing-powder to Bombay householders in the Pinjapole area on July 27 received an unpleasant shock when she found the welcome in one house warmer than usual. Men from the Nirma Chemical Works (expected 1982 sales: Rs 40 crore) an Ahmedabad firm that manufactures and markets the phenomenally successful washing-powder of the same name, wanted to know what the girl was doing distributing what they claimed were 'spurious' packets of their product.

In the V.P. Road Police Station, the girl broke down and admitted that she was from the Domestic Research Bureau, an in-house market research set-up of soap and detergent giant Hindustan Lever (1981 sales: Rs 520 crore). As she was unable to explain why a Lever employee was doling out polypacks of Nirma along with a leaflet carrying the company's infringed trade mark and design, Lever executives were called to the police station to clarify matters. And complaint number 33067 for trade mark violations was filed against the multinational.

In a statement to the police, Lever project executive D. Ranganathan, who handled the research bureau, admitted that his company had got Nirma leaflets printed and distributed packets of Nirma for research purposes; he insisted he didn't know what the research was for. A raid on Lever's Bombay headquarters later confirmed that Nirma was being researched—complete questionnaires relating to the product were found—and raids in Ahmedabad the next week revealed a similar operation there.

Response Check: Lever executives last fortnight explained that they were only working out the response to a new product, Sunlight, a competitor for Nirma. Muktesh Pant, the manager handling the new detergent, stated that they had distributed Nirma as a 'control' to 900 houses for eventual comparison with Sunlight, which they would distribute to 900 housewives. Late in August, the issue was settled out of court. Lever assured Nirma that they had destroyed the controversial Nirma leaflets and the printing blocks used to make them, got rid of all Nirma stocks, and undertook not to do this kind of research in the future.

Nirma proprietor Karsanbhai K. Patel, however, is still not convinced that Lever's effort was ordinary market research. Says he: "Market research is done with unbranded products, without leaflets extolling the features of your products while running down those of the other. Further, each household is given three empty bottles to collect the used washing liquid in. I suspect this is just part of their campaign to discredit small-scale producers, as they have been doing with the Government for the last three years." Despite sales of Rs 40 crore, Nirma is technically a small-scale company: it has been divided into five different proprietorships and total investment is less than Rs 22 lakh— the upper limit for such companies.

The dispute may have been settled amicably, but it has underscored one fact: Lever is close to panic over Nirma's success with the housewives. The washing-powder came into the shops a little over a ago, has grabbed a hefty 38 per cent market in the western region, accordi Operations Research Group figures tained from market sources. Lever established Surf has taken a severe bat its share has dropped from roughly cent to 10 per cent. It is not alone: Oil Mills' Sway, Godrej's Key and Ta have also taken a beating.

Winning Spree: The prime reas Nirma's success is its price which at kg is less than a third of Surf's Rs 2 But even in cash terms, desp staggering difference in prices has now outstripped its closest titor, accounting for 28 per c sales revenue in the western reg compared to Surf's 23 per cent.

Of course, in absolute terms revenue from Lever's array of gents—for home washing, for trial purposes, and detergent for export—is much higher Nirma's expected sales revenu 40 crore this year. Also, Le very large sales of the deterg Rin, which falls in a separate Thus in terms of total deterg of cakes and powders Nirma match for the giant—but th has appeared on the wall, faintly.

Even a cursory sampling shows how Nirma is swallow chunks of the market. Sa Kamli, general manager of Bazaar cooperative chain in "Today the largest selling p our stores is Nirma. Of the Surf has suffered the least, sin a faithful clientele, but even S now tend to buy Nirma in to Surf for their bulk re quirements, like bed-sheets and so on. Nirma has a v potential and in my opinion will shoot up even more. predict for the long term, b immediate future it is sure to successful." Lever executives however, that Nirma poses threat to their products. Pant exp "It is selling in a completely differe segment. They are converting users ing soap into detergent users and whole new market."

Roaring Success: Nirma Works' progress has been truly It started as a one-man operation Ahmedabad shed in 1969; it co run without electric power and a cottage industry run entirely b labour. The powder comes simply

The prime reason for Nirma's success is its price which at Rs 6 a kg is less than a third of Surf's Rs 20 a kg. But even in cash terms, despite the staggering difference in price, Nirma has now outstripped its closest competitor, accounting for 28 per cent of sales revenue in the western region as compared to Surf's 23 per cent.

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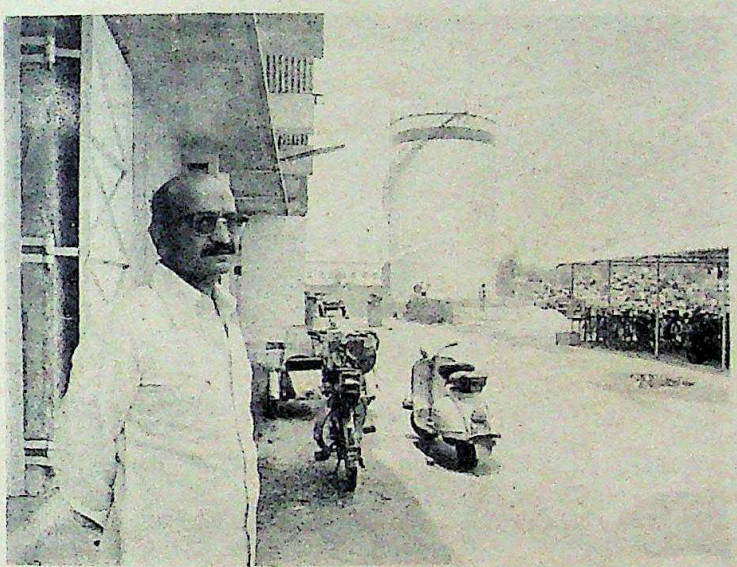
...ylene bag that is hand-stapled. ...turmeric-coloured powder made ...under Rs 10 lakh, this year sales ...will be over Rs 40 crore, and 1985 ...expected to be well above Rs 100

...western region apart, Nirma has a ...ding presence in Delhi: introduced ...with modest shipments of 10,000 ...gramme bags a month, it now sells ...bags a month. Enthuses Patel: "We ...to enter the eastern and southern ...but already we are selling more ...powder than any other company, ...don't count exports and ...al detergents. Next year ...make a massive thrust ...east and soon after that ...south."

...terms of revenue, Surf ...a vast lead in the ...market. But market ...last year suggested ...rma had the edge in ...it sold over 26 per cent ...ered detergents in the ..., as against just over 25 ...by the long established ...product. The established ...manufacturers are ...because of the com... short time Nirma has ...to achieve this domi... and also because it has ...east and south, and ...small town and rural ...that Surf dominates



Patel outside the Nirma factory: taking on a titan

...a is wreaking havoc only in the ...said a Bombay market analyst: ...ng in extremely limited markets ...has done what the established giants ...achieve in the entire country. It is ...understand their fear that the com... achieve the same kind of results ...country."

...ittedly, Nirma has major advan... price, 30 per cent of Surf's, is also ...50 per cent than that of other ...ts like Det, Point and Tej. Since the ...uses no power it is not charged ...ty, giving it a big 15.75 per cent ...expensive ingredients like optical ...and chemical water-softener are ...tel feels the marginal increase in ...quality is achieved at an extremely ...in costs. But the major cost saving ...policy to limit net profits to 7 per ...turnover, passing the rest of the ...ty—due to ever expanding ...—back to the consumer. Thus, ...petitive products have more than ...in price between 1972 and 1982, ...gone up by only 50 per cent, from ...Rs 6 a kg, a boon for users plagued

PATEL is a shrewd administrator and financial manager for his 38 years. Bald and greying at his long sideburns, he speaks little English, prefers his native Gujarati, and has only a smattering of Hindi. The son of a moderately well-off farmer in Gujarat's Mehsana district, Patel at 19 qualified as a chemist with a B.Sc degree. For the next six years, he worked as a laboratory assistant, first at the New Cotton Mills of the Lalbhai group and later in the Gujarat Government's Department of Mining and Geology.

In 1969, at the age of 25, Patel set up the company named after his year-old daughter. For the next three years, he ran the one-man outfit in the time he could take off from hs office. Once a week, he would run off a batch of hand-made detergent packets which he would market door-to-door on Sundays on his bicycle. "At a price of about Rs 3 a kg Nirma was an instant success," he recalls. "Although I couldn't cover many houses, once I had supplied the detergent to a housewife she became a permanent customer."

In 1972, Patel gave up his job to take up manufacture full-time. He dropped the door-to-door sales method for the more routine retail sales, found a small industrial shed in an Ahmedabad suburb, Khokhara-Mehmdabad. Three years later, his brand was firmly established in Gujarat and Maharashtra. Then came the real thrust: a picture of his daughter dancing in a gleaming frock was pasted on the pack, and radio advertisements and slides were made.

Two years later, Nirma left Surf behind in western India in terms of sales tonnage, and five years after this was established on the national scene. Says Jitubhai Kothari, the company's sales and liaison man in Bombay: "From the start our production has grown at 40 to 50 per cent each year. Unlike large-scale companies, which grow in sales revenue due to inflation, but are severely restricted for production increases, we have no such restrictions on capacity in the small-scale sector."

Businesslike Methods: The company makes a virtue of austerity—built entirely on internally generated resources, till 1980 it had never taken a loan and even today borrowings are restricted to minor requirements of short-term working capital. Overheads are kept to the absolute minimum—only 50 people manage the 1,000 workers and run the administration. Patel himself occupies a small cubby-hole cluttered with jars of chemicals, a filing cabinet, and Nirma samples.

The bush shirted entrepreneur adopts an easy-going attitude to his employees, who feel free to walk into his office any time. Said one employee: "You don't have to take an appointment to see Karsanbhai. You just walk in, say your piece and promptly get back to work." Patel is a strict nine-to-five man, and refuses to work, discuss business or even take business calls once he gets home to his wife, two sons and two daughters. The new five-bedroom bungalow in Ahmedabad's high class Ambawadi colony is his only luxury—and even this is shared by his six-member family and his aged parents.

But Patel spends lavishly for his beloved Nirma. This year, Nirma will spend Rs 2 crore on advertising and promotion alone, and with the planned thrust next year to the east and the south, this will go up substantially. Next year, too, Patel plans to set up another factory in a backward part of Mehsana. In 1983, a 10,000-tonne mechanised detergent unit will go on-stream in the Kandla Free Trade Zone. Nirma is obviously coming of age.

Gearing itself to meet the challenge, last fortnight Lever finalised plans for the launch of Sunlight. It will sell for Rs 12 a kg—double Nirma's price—but the advertising leaflet distributed with the detergent pulls no punches, claiming that a half-kilogramme of the "Lever quality product" is better than a kilogramme of "ordinary" detergent. It also claims that the "ordinary" detergent uses harmful substances like soda ash, whereas Sunlight is based on the latest technology. The battle for the dirty linen is on.

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH in Ahmedabad

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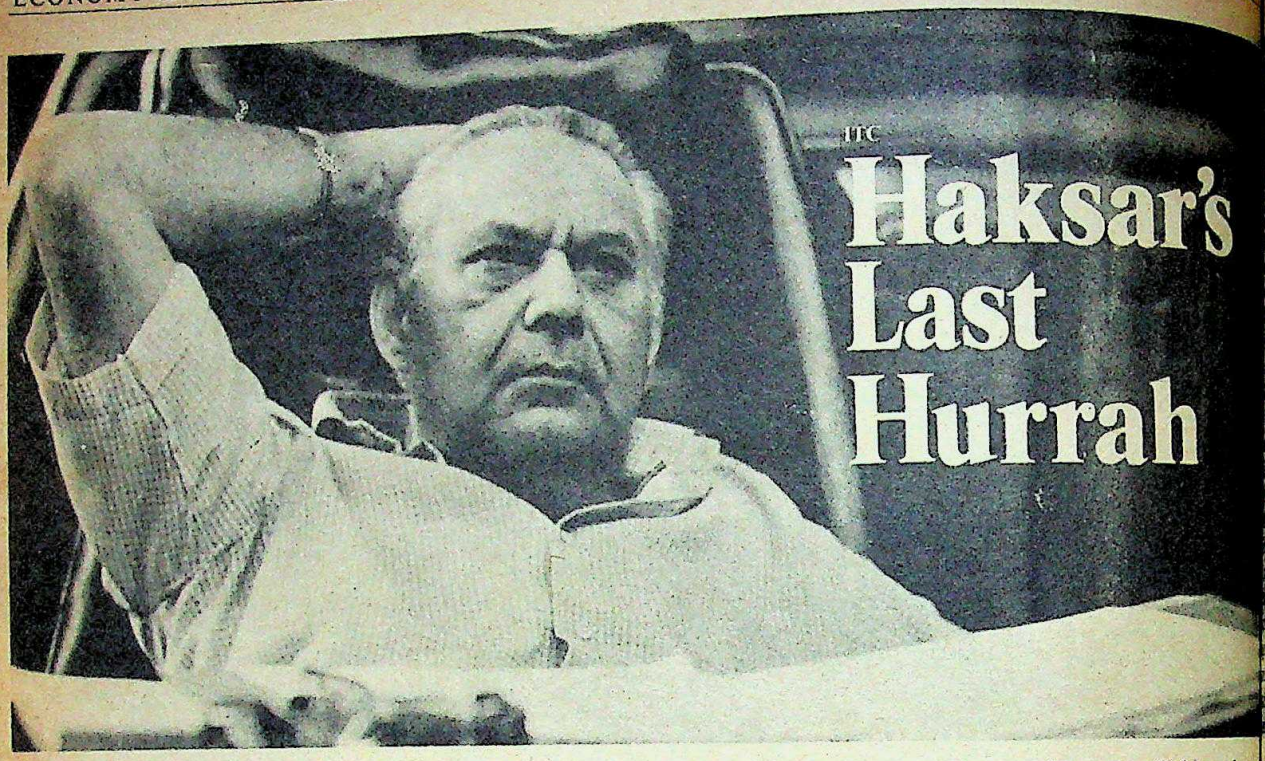


ITC

Haksar's Last Hurrah

SENTIMENTALITY rarely intrudes into shareholders' meetings, but this one was different. Over 3,000 had gathered in the incongruous setting of a Calcutta cathedral compound for ITC Ltd's 71st annual general meeting, on August 26. And dominating the stage, flanked by the other directors, out-going Chairman Ajit Narain Haksar was making a public spectacle of himself.

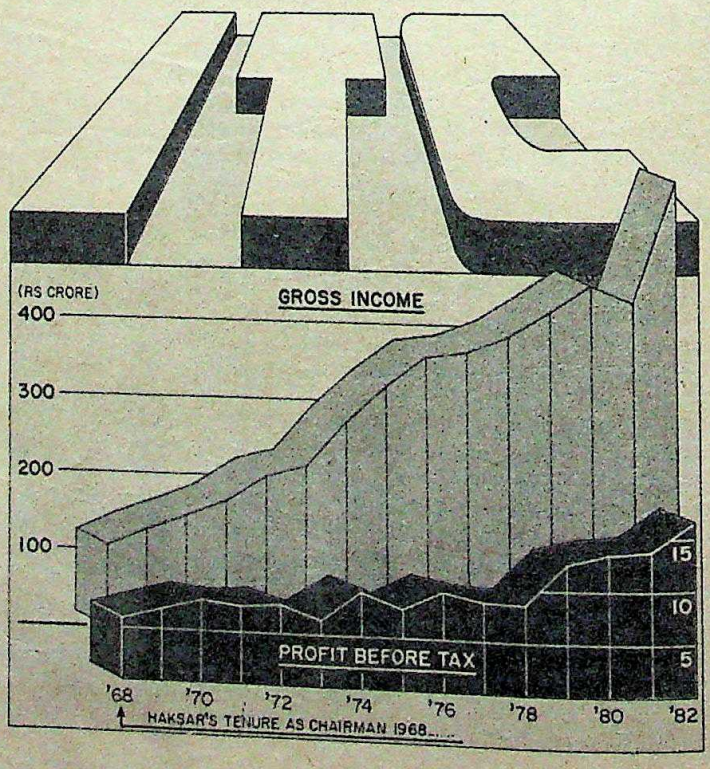
Beginning his last address to the shareholders with composure, his resonant baritone filling the vast pandal, Haksar summed up 14 years of path-breaking corporate stewardship. But before long, the sentimentality of the parting consumed a man otherwise as tough as nails. Breaking down repeatedly, often unable to continue, Haksar barely managed to get through his half-hour address before collapsing into his chair, turning away from the hushed crowd to bury his face in a handkerchief

Honorary Post: The assembled gathering was no less moved. Shareholder after shareholder ran to the nearest microphone to demand that Haksar should not leave. And by the end of the day, they had had their way: a resolution was passed unanimously to appoint Haksar chairman emeritus. Haksar insisted he looked forward to retiring next January, when he turns 58, but finally consented to accepting the honorary post.

The handsome honour, without precedent in any professionally-run Indian company, only underscored the measure of Haksar's achievements since becoming chairman in 1968 of the then Imperial Tobacco Company. Taking charge flabby, inbred, foreign-owned orga struggling to hold on to its market a non-priority industry, Haksar has a course that is already corporate

Imperial Tobacco became Tobacco, the change in name follow Haksar's fierce nationalism and his the company's foreign principals int ising shareholding. "I my country came be company," says Haksa ing a memorable meet the directors of British can Tobacco Compa after he became c "And that control of pany's operations w to be in India."

There soon follo other change of name, signifying this time th tious and far-sighted cation from a semi- highly-taxed tobacco to hotels, fisheries, paper boards and ma the process, the com held on to its lea tobacco; its rapidly hotels division ha outstripped much chains; its printing a ing division has be largest converter in th industry; and Bha Paperboards Ltd.



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...has the highest efficiency rating ...paper boards industry, with a capacity ...of 115 per cent. There is probably ...professional chairman of a com... has made the same kind of funda... contribution to his company.

...K.N. Randheria who was a senior ...till 1979: "For an organisation ...over 50 years had been a single-...single-business company, diversifi... such a radical scale called for skills ...ities of an exceptional level." Adds ...ra, till recently vice-chairman of ...now corporate affairs counsellor: ...Haksar, a stagnant company sud... to life, and became vibrant and ... The change achieved in 14 years is ... In 1968, no one would have ...this was possible."

...gerial Revolution: But Haksar's ...tion to ITC has been more than the ...of the individual changes he pu... ...ugh. Armed with an MBA from the ...Business School, and a faith in ...ment science and market research ...caused problems in a conservative ..., Haksar nevertheless took over as ...pany's first Indian chairman and proceeded to stamp his personality on one of the country's largest companies. He gave what was a "very *pucca*" company the philosophy of meshing its own growth with national needs, and then proceeded to bring about a minor managerial revolution, transforming hide-bound executives concerned with their specialist tasks into managers who thought as businessmen. Says Randheria: "I have not seen any other company in which professionals have been made into entrepreneurs in the way Haksar has.... what he calls the proneurial style."

While setting the new direction, dictating the pace and dominating the company's thought processes and actions, Haksar has nevertheless built a management team with strength all the way down. Says Santanu Ray, who was vice-chairman of ITC till he left in 1977: "The structure that has been built in ITC is very very strong, and professionalism is of a very high order." The result is a company which, as Haksar says, was once "sufficient unto itself, alienated from the environment," but is now aggressively outward-looking, quick to spot opportunities and home in on them, and ready to build on the base he has created.

In his first address to shareholders in 1969, Haksar asked them to "prepare for the challenge of the future... (for the company) to play its part in the economic development of the country." Looking back on the strategy he adopted, Haksar says: "We identified the country's needs as generating employment, earning foreign exchange, developing core sector industry, and using natural resources in a proper manner. Then we assessed our own strengths and weaknesses, and harmonised the country's needs with our abilities."

THE MOVE into hotels came because the company had a vast store of marketing expertise and consumer servicing skills; and the hotels earned foreign exchange while being employment-intensive. The move into paper boards broke new ground in a field where no one had cared to invest for over a decade, while helping to use natural wood resources and easing a shortage. Exports became a major priority in the drive to earn foreign exchange, and forays were made into garment exports, fisheries for foreign markets, and exports of a number of other items; foreign exchange earnings have

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...TERVIEW

...TC Is Now Set For A Take-off'

...AJIT Narain Haksar, 57, has had the ...of career others dream of: the second ...n to get an MBA from the Harvard ...ness School, almost half his 34 years in ...C have been as either director or chair... Joining the company when officers ...e evaluated by such yardsticks as their ...y to play golf, he stubbornly refused ...play the game till he had become ...rman. Equally assiduously staying ...y from cocktail parties ("It is more ...portant to have a clear head in the ...rning"), he ascribes his success to a ...ssive wish to succeed and plain bloody ...work". Haksar took time off between ...board meetings to spend three hours in ...de-ranging interview. Excerpts:

...On his major success in ITC: I have ...n able to change the fundamental ...ction of a single-product company ...s was almost wholly foreign-owned ...an Indian, multi-product company ...meshes with the national environ...

...On his strategy for change: We iden... the country's needs... Then we as... our own strengths and weaknesses, ...harmonised the country's needs with ...abilities. The aim was to discharge the ...l responsibility that we felt we had.

On his management style: Management styles should be based on the country's culture and ethos. This is true of Japan, where they have not imposed an alien industrial culture on society. In India, the family is the basic social unit, which is why you find so many successful family-owned businesses.

The management style in India needs to be benevolently authoritarian, provided that people can grow under you. But you can't impose basic decisions. Through discussion and argument, basic decisions should emerge.

It is a one man company to the extent that I was able to initiate and promote the change of direction

On whether he has made ITC into a one-man company: Yes, it is a one-man company to the extent that I was able to initiate and promote the change of direction. In this I had to be both courageous and forthright. It has been a prodigious task, but it has also been a very very close team operation. No single man can achieve what has been done. Today ITC's top team is stronger than it has even been.

On the future of ITC: I think it is now set for a take-off. Today, most of the diversification projects have matured, and the company is in a position to take on major capital investments. In our perspective for the 1980s, we are thinking of moving into cement, electronics, energy, and going abroad in a major way.

On the task facing his successor: He will have to ask himself one question: what is the one fundamental contribution he can make to the company during his term as chairman.

On making a career in tobacco: I have not had a moment's regret. I think the anxieties about the hazards of smoking are over-played. The average per capita consumption in India is less than 10 cigarettes per month. I think these charges about multinational corporations pushing cigarettes in the Third World are unfounded.

On his future plans: I'd like to stay active, but without the anxieties and tensions of accountability and the competitiveness of life. I might do some writing, on my 34 years in ITC, and some social service.

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risen from Rs 25 lakh to around Rs 60 crore.

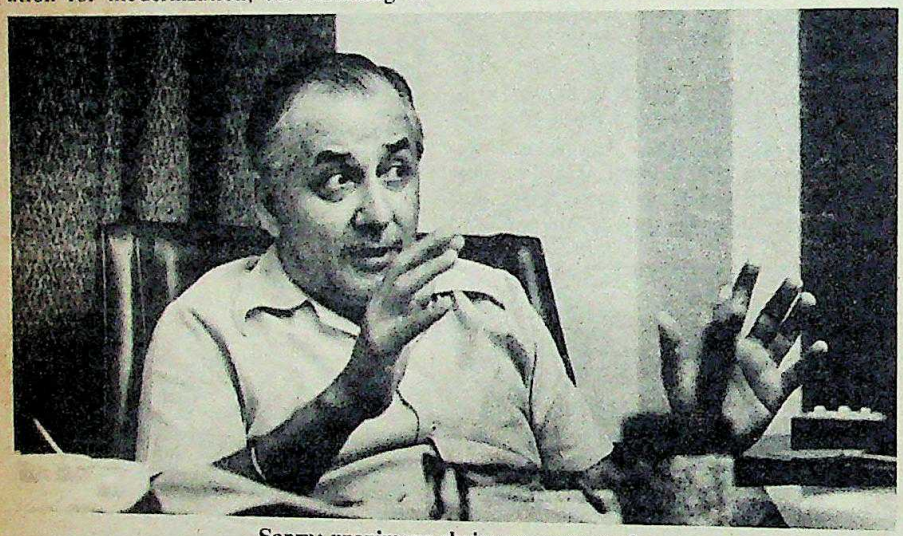
"There were many moments of anxiety," recalls Jagdish Narain Sapru, the chairman-designate who will succeed Haksar next January as chairman. "We were undertaking the diversification when the cigarette operation was under great pressure because of steadily increasing taxes. Margins were getting squeezed, and the new projects had their gestation periods. But cigarettes successfully carried the weight of the diversification. It was not an easy task, but we have pulled through."

Surviving the transition was a challenge that brought out the best in Haksar. Though cigarette margins getting narrowed, he launched a major productivity drive, worked with the unions to achieve unstinted cooperation for modernization, the installing of computers, and for unprecedented levels of productivity—in return for handsome pay packets.

Combining corporate objectives with social responsibility, ITC also moved into carpet exports in an effort to boost the income of weavers in Uttar Pradesh's Shahjahanpur. Says Haksar: "A whole family used to work on a loom and make about Rs 200 a month. We moved in, gave them training, improved the quality of the product, provided the weavers with wool, and sold the carpets abroad. The weavers' income rose dramatically, to between Rs 1,800 and Rs 2,000 per month for a family."

Failures: Nevertheless, there were the failures as well: marine fishing, for one. Started boldly in yet another bid to earn foreign exchange through shrimp exports, ITC soon ran into government restrictions, a falling market, and what Haksar admits were management failures. Eventually, the company had to pull out of the line altogether, and is now in the process of selling off its trawlers. Yet other ventures, such as garment exports, have simply not taken off.

In a number of the ventures, profits are still small. Bhadrachalam Paperboards is still to declare a dividend, severely restricted in its financial performance by being excluded from an excise concession scheme, and by the Andhra Pradesh Government's inability to cough up the promised sales tax loans. The leaf tobacco export operations are equally under pressure, and Haksar says the company has to virtually subsidise exports. Carpet exports have slowed down because the German mark is depressed. Cigarettes themselves remain barely profitable, and the company has been forced to take massive deposits from cigarette dealers in order to shore up its position: income from investment of these deposits accounted for half the pre-tax profit of Rs 16.9 crore by the Rs 589 crore company.



Sapru: unanimous choice as successor?

The financial performance, even in Haksar's farewell year, would have looked pretty grim without such buttressing of profitability. Another drawback is that Haksar's growth strategy has not permitted ITC to take advantage of officially permitted tax write-offs. So, unlike other growing companies, a hefty chunk of ITC profits goes straight to the Government as tax. To top it all, some major industrial houses—Modis, Goenkas and Dalmias—have acquired the other large cigarette companies, and have given a new edge to the competition for the smoker's preference.

Take-off: For all these continuing uncertainties, Haksar sees the company at a take-off stage. "You must see today's position in relation to that in 1968, when the company had its back to the wall," he says. "Today, most of the diversification projects have matured, and the company is in a position to take on major capital investments, to mobilise the required [illegible] and move into an era of rapid [illegible]

One major venture round the [illegible] aimed at giving Brooke Bond a run [illegible] money. In collaboration with the Lon[illegible] based Jokai group, which owns tea est[illegible] Assam, ITC plans a major entry [illegible] packaged tea market. Other projects [illegible] drawing-boards include cement, [illegible] computers, data processing, develo[illegible] ternative energy sources, and the ex[illegible] management services. "We expect [illegible] around Rs 300 crore in the next 10 [illegible] says Jagdish Sapru.

Nevertheless, with Haksar bow[illegible] the company is certainly at the cro[illegible] again. For 14 years, he has shaped it[illegible] moulded it as an extension of [illegible] personality, using a managerial style [illegible] frankly admits is authoritarian. To [illegible] traordinary degree, the ITC today [illegible] Haksar has made it. How then [illegible] company fare without Haksar?

The answer to that question [illegible] been helped by the fact that Sa[illegible] successor, happens to be Haksar's [illegible] in-law. Many in the company, [illegible] more outside, insist that Sapru was [illegible] than the second-best choice, the best [illegible] didate having been Ramesh Sarin [illegible] wever, anticipated Sapru's succes[illegible] left to lead Voltas, where he has alre[illegible] blistering pace—almost as if to [illegible] point. Santanu Ray says: "Sarin is a [illegible] loss, and I know he quit because [illegible] Sapru would get the chairmanship."

Consensus Choice: Haksar, [illegible] insists that Sapru was the consensus [illegible] made by the directors. "I talked [illegible] director individually, and asked him [illegible] thought would be the best man for the [illegible] got a 99 per cent consensus." And [illegible] Ghosh, who is now next to Sapru [illegible] hierarchy, says: "It is one of the [illegible] transitions I have known."

One corporate observer refer[illegible] Sapru as "another Rajiv Gandhi" [illegible] most circles he is accepted as a man who [illegible] won his spurs. Most observers also [illegible] that Haksar is leaving behind a team [illegible] strong enough to face any challenge. [illegible] one company insider: "This, I think, is [illegible] greatest thing about Haksar. By the [illegible] strength of his professional and [illegible] neurial skill, he became the dominant [illegible] But he always took the care to let [illegible] grow under him."

But however well or badly the [illegible] fares in future, Haksar's imprint will [illegible] as the man who took charge at a [illegible] point, set a new direction and [illegible] middle-aged giant into renewed [illegible]

—T.N. NINAN with CHAITANYA K[illegible] CHANDER L[illegible]

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...SORS

...isastrous Decisions

...HEN two people died of carbon ...noxide poisoning at the Talcher ...tiliser plant in Orissa last fort... ...t personal and unprecedented tra... ...capped a series of technical misfor... ...ne of the world's two largest coal... ...iser plants—the second also being ... at Ramagundam in Andhra ...

...h Talcher and Ramagundam were ...d to be path-breaking ventures to ...a new way of making fertiliser from ...d were brave experiments at the ...s of fertiliser manufacturing tech... ...But in the 22 months since the plants ...mmissioned in November 1980, they ...en bedevilled by a succession of ...l problems that have now brought ...estion the wisdom of going in for ...nts in the first place.

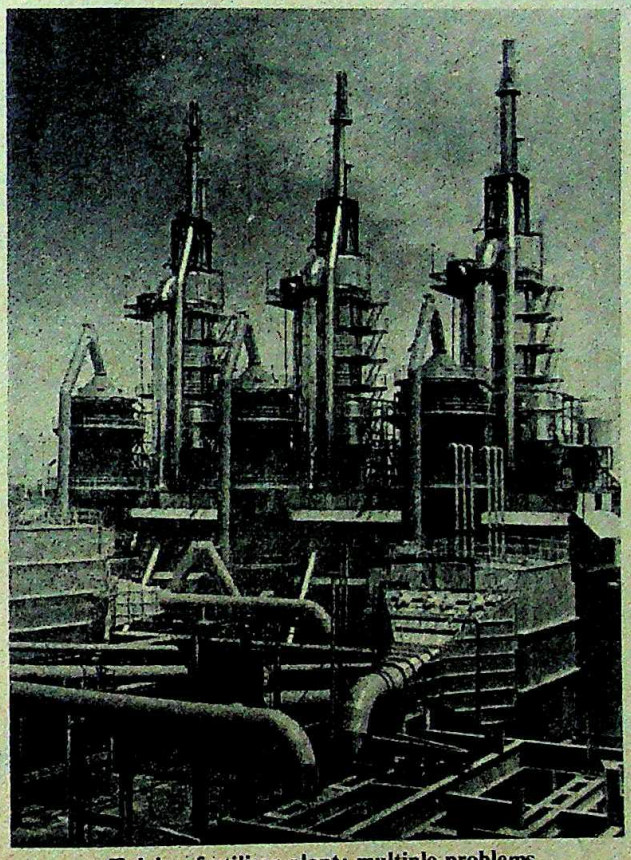
...cher, crippled among other things by ...power problems, had in fact been ...t for over five months, from early ...o mid-August. When power was ...sured last fortnight, the start-up ...s led to the carbon monoxide leak ...sed the so far unreported deaths of ...t labourer and a plant engineer, ...hra.

...blems Galore: In the 22 months of its ...e, Talcher has achieved less than ...t of its installed capacity; and the ...t at Ramagundam has done little ...ch plant is losing a staggering Rs 10 ...r, adding up to a combined loss of ...s a year and making the Fertiliser ...ion of India (FCI), which owns the ... biggest loser among all public ...erns in the country.

...st of problems at both these plants ...s a vindication of Murphy's Law: ...hich can go wrong will go wrong. ...e equipment arrived inordinately ...mmissioning was five years behind ... Then there were several equipment ... leaks and what-have-you. Ma... ...dered from Czechoslovakia was ...cheap aluminium, instead of the ...stainless steel, an economy measure ...ved dear.

...order was given to Czechoslovakia ...t place in an effort to save foreign ... the Czechs offered rupee pay... ...s. But the machinery was both ...ified underdesigned. Dollars were ...en much more has been lost. ...e equipment has worked no better. ...e instrumentation system, in parti... ...s functioned defectively, giving ... false alarms and leading to numerous unnecessary shut-downs.

Poor Coal: A major problem has been the wretched quality of the coal supplied. Talcher, like Ramagundam, was designed to take coal with 17 per cent ash content, but the plant could operate even if the ash content went up to 25 or 30 per cent. Against this, the coal supplied to Talcher has often had 45 per cent ash, which must be some kind of world record. The poor coal has meant, for one thing, that instead of using 3 tonnes of coal to produce one tonne of ammonia, the plant has needed 4.5 tonnes—sending costs shooting skyward.



Talcher fertiliser plant: multiple problems

But even this extra burning of coal has not generated sufficient steam in the boilers, thus restricting the plant's operational capacity. As if all this weren't enough, the poor coal also led to highly corrosive microcomponents in the gas from the coal, so that sections of the plant were fully corroded in no more than four months.

With the problems seemingly endless, at least two expert committees have studied what should be done to salvage the experiment. The first submitted its report last year, calling for investment in fresh balancing equipment. Unwilling to cough up more money, the Government then appointed a second committee, which reported six months ago that additional investment of Rs 125 crore would have to be made in each plant—more than half the cost of the original plants—in order to install additional boilers and gasifiers as well as captive power sets, and to replace corroded equipment.

This has proved another fish bone which the Government does not want to swallow. But the indecision has created fresh problems: on the one hand, no proper returns can come from the money already spent and on the other, a downstream heavy water unit (crucial to the country's atomic energy programme) cannot get going because the fertiliser plant is not functioning half the time.

Uncertain Future: The indecision also means a continuation of the uncertainty regarding the third coal-based fertiliser plant at Korba, in Madhya Pradesh, where no less than Rs 20 crore have already been spent in anticipation of project clearance. This includes Rs 13 crore spent on importing the Czech equipment which has proved a disaster at the other two plants.

In retrospect, should the decision to go in for coal-based fertiliser projects have been taken at all? Says a concerned government official: "We have jumped in where others feared to tread. No one else has built coal-based fertiliser plants of this size. Now how can we invest even more money when the plants are yet to prove themselves?" Comments another observer with depressing candour: "I think the simple problem is that our chemical engineers just aren't good enough for this kind of job."

But fertiliser technologists, both in the FCI and outside, insist that there is nothing wrong with the technology *per se*, and that the problems have resulted more from wrong decisions on who should supply equipment. Adds an FCI director: "You also have to look at the long-term options. Coal is the only resource which we have in plenty. And from a long-term point of view, we simply have to develop coal-based technology. I don't think we have a choice."

— T.N. NINAN with bureau reports

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A bold step forward

Establishing a most sophisticated spinning complex with latest technical know-how having versatility to spin all kinds of fibres

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ooch High

HE PEOPLE of Punjab, among the terprising in the country, know a good thing when they see it. their successes is the liquor indus- but it is not a success that gladdens the of the state Government. Illicit dis- of the glass that cheers match the producers bottle for bottle, vend ures at nearly a third of the official price, and make fortunes. Even as ds of families in Punjab's 12,000-odd flourish, the Govern- ses Rs 150 crore in an- excise revenue: this is equal to the state's earnings from liquor expected to be Rs 155 1982. The extent of the 's loss can be gauged simple fact that liquor ms a hefty third of the tal expected tax earn- Rs 450 crore.

annual consumption r in Punjab—country ian made foreign liquor ound 10 crore bottles of each. The illicit dis- provide exactly half of ing the average Punjabi annual quota of 80 The illicit liquor sells for Rs 10 to bottle; the legitimate variety, the en by duties slapped on by the es, sells for Rs 28 to Rs 32. The viously make the difference because eties cost much the same to pro- between Rs 2 and Rs 5 a bottle.

outh Operation: The duty burden is t of success for the illicit liquor which is expanding at the rate of 25 every year. The clandestine stills d places to hide and produce—in s away from prying eyes, and, in the son, in the small islets formed on by the rivers in spate. And whether a and Bhagar in Patiala, Patti and Amritsar, Shahkot and Nakodar ndur, Bassian and Jagraon in a, Jalalabad or Harikepattan in r, distilling and selling procedures the same.

empty drum of coal tar is filled with mixture of molasses and water, or water and the bark of the *kikar* tree. is kept covered with earth until the ferments fully; for quicker ation, most distillers add a handful The drum is then placed over a fire ed to an improvised tube, which in turn is passed through water—preferably running—into an earthen jar. The liquor is ready. Later, it is filled into rubber tubes of all descriptions.

The distribution takes place at night. Horses, bicycles and trucks ferry the liquor from the river beds of the Ravi, the Sutlej, the Beas and the Jhajjar to prearranged centres. The carriers are usually from the lower castes, ready to make an extra buck. The consumers come from all classes; indeed, the quality of the illicit liquor is quite high and it is not only the first choice of the Punjabi farmer but also finds its way across the border to Pakistani connoisseurs. Traders claim that their sales skyrocket during weddings and festivals, and contend that politicians serve their 'daru'; election time is reportedly the peak time. Rounding off this success story is the fact that, in contrast to other states, deaths due to liquor in Punjab are very rare.

Illicit still unearthed in Punjab: unquenchable thirst

The producers are proud of their business. Says Sukhdev Singh of Ferozepur: "Ours is the pure stuff, and cheaper too. We have the market, despite the ban." Nasiba, an old hand at the game, and something of a master distiller, asserts: "We can give such drinks that you will never forget." His produce is patronised even by excise officials. The various varieties of liquor he makes include *angoori*, *saunfi* and *santari*, which are very popular.

Corruption: While Nasiba can charge between Rs 20 and Rs 50 a bottle, others in the trade, such as Bant Singh of Ludhiana, set their prices lower. He says: "We prepare for a quick kick, and our clients cannot afford to pay more than Rs 8 to Rs 10 per bottle." Bant Singh's family of nine own no land and depend entirely on their illicit still for a living. He gives a fair picture of the corruption that supports the racket when he laments: "One-third of the earnings go to the police and the excise staff and yet we have to go to jail when our turn comes." The 'turn' apparently comes when an excise official decides to fulfil his 'quota' of raids and arrests.

There is thus money in it for everybody; even the carriers can make quite a lot if they are prepared to take risks. Says Santa Singh of Amritsar: "We make from Rs 50 to Rs 100 per trip, and more if we agree to go to jail at the biddings of our masters when they are asked to fill in their turn by the *sarkar*."

Such understanding between the law-breakers and the lawmen means that the law—which provides for fines and between six months and three years in prison—often goes unheeded. On a larger scale, the politicians often bow to the powerful liquor lords. The state is yet to recover Rs 6 crore from the vendors, a sum owing since 1967. The Congress(I) allegedly accepted Rs 10 lakh from them for last year's massive kisan rally. Excise and Taxation Commissioner Hari Ram says that last year he seized 1.41 lakh litres of illicit liquor, 8.71 lakh kg of mixture and 1,580 working stills, but agreed that he was only touching the fringe of the colossal business.

The crux of the matter, of course, is the heavy-handed excise policy, which makes the lower-priced illicit liquor so attractive to the thirsty. The Government, in its eagerness to milk a fat cow, is overplaying its hand and letting an equal part of the bounty get away. Add to this the all-pervasive politician-official-distiller nexus and the inadequate staff and equipment of the concerned department and it is quite clear why Punjab's illicit stills are brimming with good cheer.

—GOBIND THUKRAL

THE MARKETS

Playing Safe

ON THE face of it, despite rumours of recession and other calamities, the stock market has not done too badly. The share index is down by just over 10 per cent in a year, which is neither here nor there. Some shares, shipping, for instance, have fared badly, but these are exceptions. Other shares, like cement, have done better than expected, but this too is an exception. Corporate performance has been reasonably satisfactory, and the market seems to have been influenced as much by extraneous factors as by the spate of debentures and other financial measures taken by industry.

By and large, debentures—convertible debentures, that is—seem to have caught popular fancy and are doing well. There are two reasons for this: firstly, debentures provide a backdoor method to purchase equity shares at near rock-bottom prices; secondly, the very fact that a company is issuing debentures means that it has an

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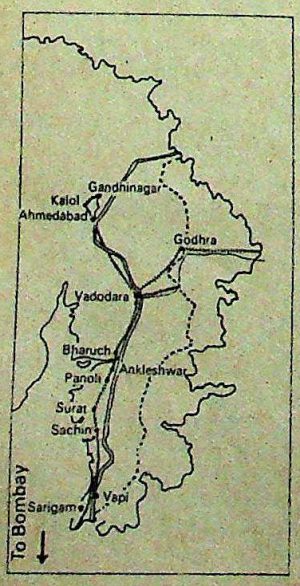

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ACTIVE STOCKS

	High 1982	Low	Close 18.8.82	Change on Fortnight
...land	59.00	32.00	36.25	(1.25)
...Cement	377.00	212.50	353.00	17.00
	1,650.00	1,200.00	1,200.00	(75.00)
	49.60	36.00	42.30	(0.80)
	42.00	26.50	33.00	(3.00)
...Chem	36.05	26.80	36.05	1.80
	38.50	30.00	37.50	(1.00)
	68.00	53.00	62.00	(6.00)
...Trust	80.00	62.00	69.50	1.50
...Dyeing	18.69	15.50	15.94	0.13
...Paints	26.00	20.20	25.80	0.20
...Bond	18.60	14.30	14.75	(0.05)
...Electric	346.00	211.50	214.00	(4.50)
...Mills	220.00	177.50	202.50	2.50
...Yarn	1,020.00	720.00	720.00	nil
...Spinning	25.00	18.10	19.30	(0.40)
...Fibres	46.00	41.50	45.75	0.15
...India	168.00	80.00	82.00	(3.00)
	16.20	11.65	12.10	(1.20)
...Dyes	44.50	31.31	34.94	(0.43)
...Club Mills	22.00	18.30	21.90	0.10
...India	21.50	16.50	21.50	1.50
...Hotels	41.00	26.00	33.50	(1.50)
	49.87	34.25	37.00	2.00
...Specialities	48.00	35.75	48.00	1.00
...Nylon	48.75	38.00	41.25	(1.00)
...Electric	30.50	25.40	30.00	(0.15)
...Lee Williams	37.20	29.40	29.40	(0.90)
...Fertilisers	506.00	368.00	420.00	nil
...Aluminium	49.20	30.00	31.70	nil
...Lever	56.00	48.00	50.00	(3.00)
...Motors	32.14	21.82	28.06	1.04
...Dyes	28.00	23.00	24.50	0.50
...Aluminium	23.60	17.00	18.20	(0.05)
...Cable	25.00	18.90	21.25	0.35
...Dynamit	247.50	172.50	212.50	2.50
...Explosives	26.00	20.00	20.10	(1.30)
...Hotels	107.00	50.00	58.00	1.00
...Organic	35.00	26.00	29.00	0.50
...Dyestuff	35.90	26.20	30.70	(0.95)
...Land	162.00	125.00	157.00	(1.00)
...Exchange	45.00	29.00	31.00	1.00
	33.75	21.00	33.75	2.25
...Tea	36.00	28.75	29.20	(1.30)
...Synthetics	73.20	55.60	59.10	(0.90)
...Iron	56.70	45.10	56.70	2.00
...Engineering	150.00	110.00	121.00	(2.00)
...(Madras)	35.75	20.00	25.50	(1.75)
...& Toubro	86.00	45.50	52.50	(1.00)
...Casts	17.65	14.50	17.65	0.40
...& Mahindra	61.00	38.00	43.50	(2.00)
...Industries	272.50	220.00	240.00	(5.00)
...Iron	36.50	22.50	25.75	nil
...Organic	29.00	16.50	22.25	(2.25)
	210.00	168.00	178.00	nil
...Paper	63.00	37.50	40.00	0.75
...Electricals	48.50	34.50	38.50	(1.00)
...India	30.30	26.00	26.00	(0.60)
...Auto	97.00	58.75	69.50	(2.50)
	407.00	303.00	346.50	(8.50)
...Steel	29.75	21.00	28.00	(0.12)
...Paper	58.25	33.00	38.00	nil
...Alkali	177.00	118.00	155.00	2.00
...Fibres	29.80	27.30	29.75	(0.05)
...Tea	52.12	41.37	52.12	4.50
...Steel	66.00	34.00	38.00	nil
...& Laxman	16.60	12.60	15.00	1.00
...Minerals	31.50	19.00	22.75	(0.75)
...Steel	59.00	45.50	52.50	(1.00)
...Tea	429.00	310.00	316.00	(5.00)
...Textiles	737.00	367.00	380.00	(28.00)
...Cables	70.75	35.75	40.50	(1.00)
...Electric Black	28.10	23.90	24.00	(1.75)
...Tea	33.50	24.10	24.40	(1.85)
...Sugar	291.00	228.00	265.00	13.00
	26.50	19.10	20.10	(1.80)

ambitious expansion programme lined up for the near future which must ultimately pep up its equity and enrich its shareholders. Initially, the bond issues were meant primarily for raising working capital in a tight money market but the idea of bonds as a source of working capital has now receded into the background.

Good Yardstick: The close link between debentures and growth is an important aspect of all such issues, though investors may not realise it. The conversion ratios and other particulars are far less important than the size and feasibility of the expansion programme to be financed out of the issue. From this angle the debenture issue of an engineering company may not be half as attractive as a similar issue by, say, a chemical company, since given the usual ups and downs to which most industries are subject, a chemical company is likely to do better in the long term than an engineering company. The trouble is, however, that most investors are short-term speculators and are not really impressed by such fine differences. But when one has to choose between so many attractive offers, one has to go by certain criteria, and growth is always a good yardstick for such calculations.

Another criterion, of course, could be whether the company belongs to a particular business group. Some groups have been doing exceptionally well and some are just marking time. For one reason or other, Birlas seem to have taken a back seat and have few really big expansion programmes on hand. Tatas are doing slightly better, but not much, and so are Mafatlals. Larsen & Toubro and Mahindra have turned cautious and so have most Calcutta-based groups except Goenkas who are in any case moving out of West Bengal. Group-wise, therefore, there is not much of a choice, for in a big group, a slow-moving company affects the progress of all other units, including those that might have struck out on their own and pushed ahead.

In such a situation, single companies are a safer bet, provided they have the necessary track record to back them. Companies like Asian Paints in Bombay and Ranbaxy in Delhi have come a long way in the course of the last 20-odd years and are apparently pushing ahead faster than most companies in their flock. Asian is the No. 1 paint company and Ranbaxy is among the top 5 Indian-owned drug companies in the country. Both have excellent research and development support to back them, Ranbaxy (according to its chairman) having developed all its products in its own research laboratories. This kind of single-mindedness always shows in the bottom line, which is, when everything is said and done, the only line that counts.

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit & Currency	TT Selling Rates(Rs)	TT Buying Rates(Rs)
Australia	1 As $	9.4034	9.3089
Austria	100 As Sch	55.5974	55.0272
Bahrain	1 Dinar	26.0845	25.8860
Bangladesh	100 Taka	43.5764	43.2449
Canada	1 Can $	7.8012	7.7212
Egypt	1 Egp £	11.7799	11.6898
France	1 Fr Frc	1.3974	1.3821
Hong Kong	1 HK $	1.6043	1.5882
Indonesia	100 Rupiah	1.4875	1.4762
Iran	100 Rial	11.4556	11.3685
Italy	100 It Lira	0.6922	0.6857
Japan	100 Jap Yen	3.7583	3.7196
Kenya	1 K Shilling	0.8997	0.8929
Kuwait	1 Dinar	33.7648	33.5079
Malaysia	1 ML $	4.1387	4.0936
Mauritius	1 Rupee	0.8751	0.8619
Nepal	1 Rupee	0.7424	0.7368
Netherlands	D Glds	3.5506	3.5142
Pakistan	1 Rupee	0.8071	0.8010
Singapore	1 Sing $	4.5037	4.4570
Spain	100 Sp Pt	8.6767	8.5950
Sri Lanka	1 Rupee	0.4721	0.4685
Sweden	1 Sw Kr	1.5699	1.5535
Switzerland	1 Sw Frc	4.6052	4.5580
Tanzania	1 T Sh	1.0336	1.0258
Thailand	100 Baht	42.0000	41.0000
UK	1 Pound	16.6959	16.5467
USA	1 US $	9.6150	9.4825
UAE	1 Dihram	2.6652	2.6450
USSR	1 Rouble	13.0575	13.9582
W. Germany	1 DM	3.9215	3.8314

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo, Ltd., New Delhi and quoted between the banks on August 23, 1982.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

PRICES	Latest	Change on month
ET Commodity Price Index		
August 17, 1982*	251.6	4.8
Cereals	240.9	6.9
Chemicals	303.0	21.6
Industrial Fibres	177.1	(1.6)
Metals	346.5	(0.2)
Sugar	220.6	(10.6)
Textile Yarns	224.2	0.2
Vegetable Oils	295.2	16.3
Gold, standard, August 18 (Rs per 10 gm)	1,655.00	15.00
Silver, .999, August 18 (Rs per kg)	2,590.00	15.00
SHARES		
ET Share Price Index		
August 18, 1982*	229.4	9.2
Cement	180.9	51.2
Chemicals	189.6	7.1
Engineering	374.3	8.2
Fertilisers	185.5	2.4
Man-made fibres	413.7	(7.6)
Paper	466.7	23.0
Rubber Goods	159.0	15.3
MONEY		**per cent**
Money Supply, July 9, 1982		1.4
Bank Deposits		2.4
Foreign Exchange Assets		(10.8)

* 1969–70 = 100

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KARNATAKA

Battle Of Tongues

Each and every linguistic state possesses a personality of its own reflected in its language, its cultural heritage and unique history. These various personalities converge into a national soul just as different ragas blend themselves into a sonorous symphony.

—Report of the Language Committee in Karnataka

A YEAR and a half after the Language Committee in Karnataka headed by eminent educationist Dr V.K. Gokak submitted its report to the state Government, recommending that Kannada be the sole first language in the educational syllabi, the issue continued to strike a discordant note in the state instead of a "sonorous symphony". Last fortnight, a month after the Government passed an order making Kannada the sole first language, following the state legislature's unanimous acceptance of this formula, the linguistic minorities have raised the banner of protest.

Apart from filing a writ petition in the High Court requesting it to strike down the government order, a delegation of linguistic minorities headed by M.C. Perumal, opposition leader in the legislative council, met Chief Minister R. Gundu Rao requesting him to modify the order so as to make the mother tongue the first language. Said Perumal: "The new formula is detrimental to the interests of all linguistic minorities. It would eliminate and throttle minorities' languages."

Key Issue: The language tussle in the state is a literary time bomb, and is likely to be a key issue when the state goes to the polls next year. Already there have been seven deaths in three bouts of police firing. Political observers blame Gundu Rao for escalating the entire controversy. Opposition leader S. Bangarappa, Rao's main rival in the state, says: "The language tussle was Rao's own creation and it will lead to his destruction." Rao implemented the Gokak Committee report's recommendation only after widespread agitation engulfed the state. Just when he seemed to have been trapped by his own follies, he cleverly wriggled out of the firing line by getting the state legislature to unanimously approve of what is described as a 'historical' resolution to give Kannada the prime status in the educational system.

Gokak: a hornet's nest

Rao has thus made the Opposition share the onus of making Karnataka the first state in the country to take such a decision. In all other states students are given the option of studying their mother tongue as first language. Admitted Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader A.K. Subbiah grudgingly: "Rao has cleverly made us share his sins. It was a Himalayan blunder on our part to allow the decision to be taken by the legislature, for it neither helps Kannadigas nor the linguistic minorities. It is purely a political stunt."

The Opposition is now rueing its mistake of allowing Rao to get off the A top Central Government language says: "The Opposition lost a bi opportunity to topple Gundu Rao with key leaders plumbing only for Ka According to him the Gokak Co "did not care" to study the demogra linguistic minorities in the state. A s the 1971 census report on mother ton the state, the latest available sta reveals that only 65.94 per cent of the have Kannada as their mother tongu

Language Statistics: The break the minority languages in the state is: 9 per cent, Telugu 8.17 per cent, M per cent, Tamil 3.36 per cent, Tulu 3. cent and other languages 5.92 per making a total of 34.06 p of the state population have mother tongues othe Kannada. A total of 166 m tongues are spoken in K taka.

Equally significant fact that in six of the 19 d in Karnataka Kannada mother tongue of only cent of the population. In where violence broke out last, only 24.29 per cent Kannada while 50 per the population speaks T In Dakshina Kannada district only 2 cent have Kannada as their mother while the majority speak Tulu. In K Gundu Rao's home district, only 4 cent of the population speaks Kann Bangalore district half the populat not have Kannada as its mother The other two districts in which K speakers form half the population are Kannada and Bidar.

Only in the districts of T

A procession protesting against the Gokak Committee report: minority backlash

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Mandya, Hassan, Dharwar, and Kannada the mother tongue of at per cent of the population. Urdu, the second largest language group in is an important mother tongue in icts of Bellary (10.19 per cent), (10.37 per cent), Bidar (18.63 per harwar (12.32 per cent), Gulbarga per cent), Kolar (10.15 per cent) and (10.27 per cent). While Marathi is ely in Belgaum, Bidar and Uttara a. Konkani and Tulu are the major in Dakshina Kannada and Uttara a. Apart from this, in 56 of the 230 Karnataka the majority have a tongue other than Kannada.

Opposition Failure: Officials feel that position parties in the state, by fighting ously for Kannada, have lost the of mustering minority support. With ress going all out for Kannada and ta Party not lagging far behind in its for the Gokak Committee neither of can effectively make use of the one- the state population which will be by the Government's decision to Kannada the sole first language. Nor ndu Rao profit by taking what is accepted as a "political decision" to ept the Gokak Committee report.

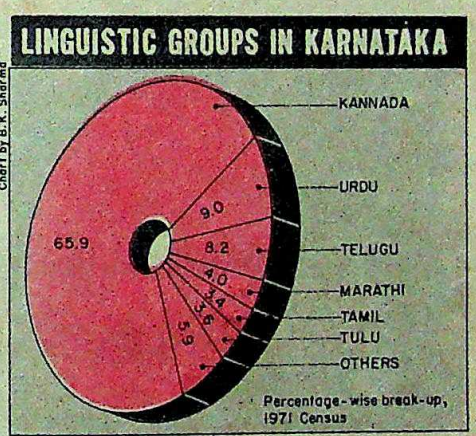
M. Raghupathy, a former council- Karnataka Kranti Ranga leader: are the Kannadigas happy with use he took such a belated decision the minorities who feel that they have ce in." By "hoodwinking" the ion into being a party to the decision prime status to Kannada, Rao has ly cut off their chances of rousing the t. The expert felt that if one of the were able to stoke the emotions of the as it could seriously shake the ul) in the coming state elections.

THOUGH education is a state sub- ct the Union Education Ministry is nxiously watching developments in ka. Officials feel that the new la- policy announced by the state ent would go against the three policy adopted by the Centre. With eft with no option but to take as sole first language in the south more likely to choose their mother and English as second languages, completely ignoring Hindi. Said an "The Karnataka Government's de- ould then be against social and tegration."

ther cause for concern is that ges form hardly 3.96 per cent of the an population. With Karnataka to impose its official languages on other states might hit back with a ce. Already the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra has threatened to expel every Kannadiga if the Government implements its decision on the Marathi-speaking population in Karnataka. Maharashtra has requested the Central Government to ask Karnataka to modify its decision. Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu has already registered its protest.

The Congress(I) is certainly not happy with the way Gundu Rao has handled the entire issue although in Parliament, when the issue was raised, Minister of State for Home N.R. Laskar, supported the state Government's decision. Laskar denied the opposition charge that the Centre had abdicated its authority with respect to providing facilities for instructions in the mother tongue at the primary stage. He ruled out a judicial inquiry into the entire tussle and said it was up to the state Government to appoint one if it found it necessary. But while the party defended Rao in Parliament, in private he has been given a dressing down and may lose his job if the language issue continues to boil.

Tactical Mistakes: It was when Rao was accused of harbouring a "Brahminical bias" by supporting the cause of Sanskrit as a first language that the chief minister decided to



appoint a committee to go into the question in the fond hope that they would favour his stand. But the Gokak Committee flummoxed him by recommending that Kannada should be the sole first language in the state. In fact, the percentage of students taking Sanskrit as first language has remained a constant 7 per cent belying the fears of Kannadigas that more students were ditching their language for Sanskrit.

But one of the possible reasons for the subsequent anger and violence in an otherwise docile state population is that the Kannadigas have, over the years, been feeling the increasing dominance of other linguistic groups in their own home state. Said Gokak: "The report of the committee was not anti-national or anti-minorities. It was meant to safeguard the interests of the Kannadigas." A study of the extent of bilingualism in the state is revealing. In 1971 out of the 26 lakh Urdu speakers in the state, only 10 lakh had learnt Kannada; similarly of the 24 lakh Telugus, hardly 11 lakh or 45 per cent spoke Kannada. Meanwhile, only three lakh of the 10 lakh Tamilians, and hardly one fourth of the state's Malayalis were conversant with it. The main grouse of the Kannada agitators was that the linguistic minorities were reluctant to integrate into the mainstream and formed their own islands of culture. When the Gokak Committee submitted its report on January 27, 1981, it took him 10 months to decide that the report would be implemented "in toto". This too, was an emotional decision taken only after he was taunted by opposition leaders with backing out. Rao admitted to close friends later that he did not really understand the implications of the Gokak Committee report and only afterwards when it was too late realised his folly.

Agitation: When the minorities started rebelling Rao developed cold feet and deferred the decision his Cabinet had taken in November 1981 to implement the Gokak Committee report. It was in last April that the All Karnataka Kannada Action Committee was formed to fight for Kannada and a series of agitations were launched. The movement gained force when matinee idol Raj Kumar joined the fray. At first Gundu Rao worked out a compromise formula which stated that the mother tongue would be the first language for students. But when the action committee decided to continue their struggle Rao, realising that it had become uncontrollable, decided to accord Kannada first language status thereby yielding to the agitators' demands.

But in doing so experts fear that he has only postponed a burning issue. The analysis is that the minorities will sooner or later rebel against the imposition of Kannada and this could lead to serious consequences within the state. Moreover, almost 4,752 primary schools and 149 secondary schools, which were so far teaching in other mediums of instructions will now have to revert to Kannada. Although Rao has promised to appoint 5,000 Kannada teachers soon the Government has so far not taken any steps to do so. As BJP leader Subbiah says scornfully: "It's a paper solution. The issue will continue to burn."

What language experts fear most is that the onus for deciding such an emotional issue will finally fall on the judiciary. With writ petitions against the Government decision already being filed by the minorities in the state High Court in Bangalore this magnificent red-tiled Victorian structure may become the battleground for a potentially dangerous issue.

—RAJ CHENGAPPA

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JUDICIARY

A Losing Battle

IT IS well known that justice delayed is justice denied. By this yardstick Indian justice is deteriorating steadily. The judiciary is fighting a losing battle against a mountainous backlog of cases which is increasing every year.

While the backlog rises inexorably so does the number of vacancies in the different high courts across the country. Even the Supreme Court is four short of its full strength. In the 18 high courts there are a total of 89 vacancies. Of these 89 vacancies, 23 are new and are to be filled for the first time. Of the remaining 66 vacancies, 20 have been lying vacant ever since the Congress(I) came to power and over a dozen of these are concentrated in three high courts—Calcutta, Assam and Himachal Pradesh.

Two other high courts—Allahabad and Patna—now have 13 vacancies each. The other courts are not far behind: Madhya Pradesh has nine vacancies, Rajasthan seven, Delhi six and Bombay, Madras and Andhra Pradesh five each.

Numerous Gaps: Such vacancies are nothing new. But the performance of the Congress(I) Government has been nothing short of abysmal. It inherited 70 vacancies from the Janata which it could not fill for over six months. In the 30 months since it came to power it has been able to recruit only 75 judges compared to the Janata which managed to appoint over 110 high court judges between March 1977 and July 1979 when Morarji Desai resigned. Last month the Government appointed four judges after a lapse of over three months.

While Congress(I) and Law Ministry sources stubbornly refuse to admit it, the reasons for the large number of vacancies are almost an open secret. Chief amongst them is the sharp difference of opinion between Congress(I) chief ministers and high court chief justices that crop up every time a name is suggested for elevation to the bench. Added to this are the differences between the Chief Justice of India and the Central Government which are also constantly coming up.

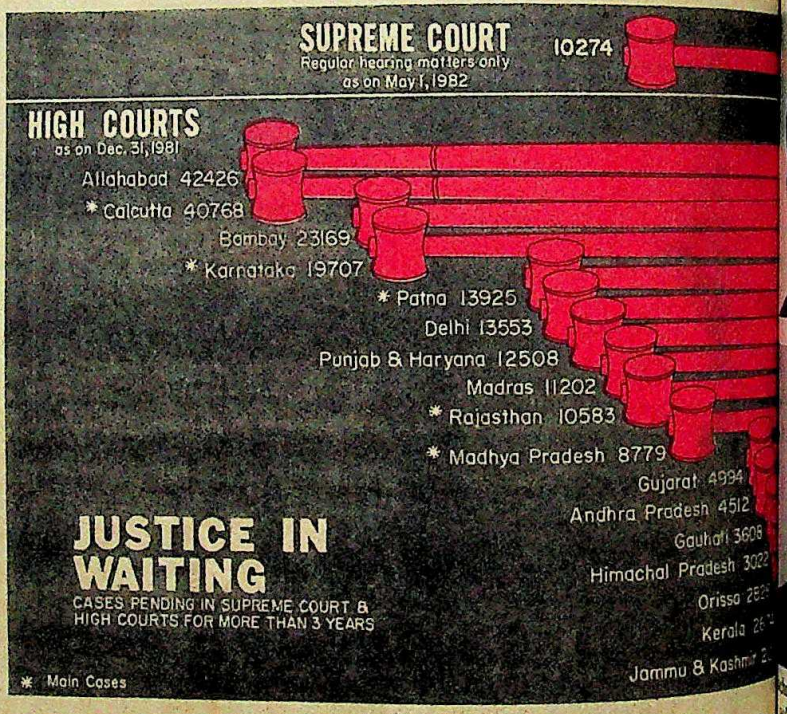
Calcutta is a perfect example of this kind of conflict. None of the authorities who have a say in the matter—the state Government, the chief justice of the Calcutta High Court, and the Union Law Ministry—is able to settle on common candidates. In other high courts—Patna and Madras—the process of filling vacancies was stalled after the chief justices of both courts were transferred.

Congress(I) leaders appear determined to get 'dependable persons' as judges. Says a Congress(I) chief minister: "We have received enough knocks from the judiciary even on frivolous matters; we want judges who would be responsive to the socio-economic situation prevailing in the country." But they have not pushed matters as they are apprehensive about what stand Chief Justice Y.V. Chandrachud and former president Sanjiva Reddy would take.

Fresh Impetus: Now that Giani Zail Singh is safely installed in Rashtrapati Bhavan, Central Government sources hint that the process of filling vacancies may now be accelerated. The Government is also said to be more confident that the law will be on its side after the recent Supreme Court judgement which held that the President has the absolute power of appointing judges. Says a Congress(I) office bearer: "We can now push socially committed people as high court judges because the law is on our side."

The vacancies have inevitably affected the working of the courts and added to the mounting number of pending cases. Judges have even gone on record to say that they cannot cope with the mountain of work. Justice Ram Manohar Sahai of the Allahabad High Court recently noted while turning down a request for early hearing of a petition: "Due to shortage of judges [illegible] nches are available for final hearing nearly the entire High Court is busy with fresh petitions and order cases. Due to difficulty even applications for vacating stay orders are being listed after a long and in cases where orders have been for expediting hearings they are not listed."

Law Ministry sources put the number of pending cases in the various courts in July at over 6,75,000. This rise from 6,17,000 in 1980. In the Supreme Court the number of pending cases has alarmingly from 18,215 in 1977 to 40,000 1982. The delays can be gauged from the that 2,047 cases filed before 1972 are to be heard in May this year. The high



also have a phenomenal 90,000 cases have been pending for over five years up from 85,140 in 1978. The Supreme has 8,588 five-year-old cases, up from in 1978.

Slow Disposal: Other reasons for the rising backlog of cases is that judges are taking more time to dispose cases. The disposal rate of cases Supreme Court declined from 82 per the newly instituted cases in 1978 to cent in 1981. In the High Courts disposal rate of cases nosedived from cent of the new cases in 1978 to only during 1981. And the widening gap the filing of new cases and the old ones has led to a phenomenal number of pending cases. The Supreme has, however, explained this by

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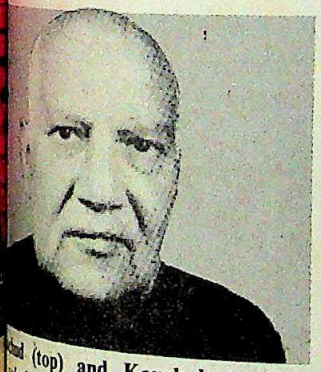
...er of constitutional matters which ...ge benches has gone up during the ...ters, thereby reducing the number ...available for other cases.

...r the biggest culprit behind delays ...f profession itself. According to a ...ce-bearer of the Delhi Bar Asso... ...enior advocates who handle large ...of cases frequently seek postpone... ...t their own convenience. And the ...ne of other members of the legal ...n who seek adjournments for trivial ...In fact hearings or arguments on ...er cent of the cases listed every day ...rt are postponed on the requests of ...s who are more often than not ...to one political party or the other. ...Government is aware of this pro-



...hal (top) and Kaushal: seeking ...lutions to a huge backlog

...s at the moment trying to work a ...nd it. Union Law Minister ...Kaushal said recently that the ...t would soon be introducing pro... ...the introduction of administrative ...to cut down the work of the ...Court and the high courts. The ...rt's intention is that eventually ...me Court and the high courts will ...with constitutional matters. ...hal has also put his mind to the ...em and come up with a 20-point ...e of action for the speedy disposal ...But if past performance is any ...ligants are going to have to put up ...sive and delayed justice for a long ...ge.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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JAMMU & KASHMIR

Boom Or Bust?

Tramboo's Shahenshah: hotel happy

KASHMIR's business tycoons are born, not with the proverbial silver spoon in their mouths, but with a financial weather-vane in their heads that informs them with uncanny precision which way the winds are blowing. Having made the obvious conclusion that tourism was the state's biggest money-spinner, they got in on the ground floor of the handicraft business and when that got too cluttered switched overnight to carpets when the boom was just starting. Now that the carpet industry is getting worn around the edges they have moved *en masse* into Kashmir's latest business boom—hotels.

Though a rather belated recognition on their part of the potential that exists they have, nonetheless, managed to clamber onto the bandwagon at a time when the field is still wide open. Till the mid-'70s, Kashmir could boast of a mere 34 hotels, including only two large capacity ones, which offered a combined total of 572 rooms or 1,250 beds. Meanwhile, tourist traffic was increasing by leaps and bounds. In 1973, for instance, tourist arrivals in Kashmir stood at 1,95,846, an increase of 47 per cent over the previous year.

Assistance: Admittedly, the state Government played a major role in the deluge that was to follow by announcing financial support and other concessional benefits to encourage private investment in the hotel industry. But even the state Government had no idea of the floodgates it was opening. By last month, Srinagar was snowed under a hotel invasion with no less than 120 hotels in the city alone, apart from the ubiquitous houseboats, providing a total of 7,200 beds and the hectic construction activity in the city loudly announces the impending entry of many more.

A one-kilometre stretch known as Boulevard Road has no less than 20 hotels currently living cheek by jowl and even more under various stages of construction. In Kashmir, however, politics and business are on the same side of the coin and the new hoteliers are part of the same club whose members are scions of the state's dominant business families. And, judging by their drawing boards, hotels are going to be their biggest business gamble yet:

► Heading the field are the well-known Tramboo brothers. The eldest, Mohammad Abdullah Tramboo diversified into hotels in 1977 with Hotel Shahenshah, then a ragged collection of three huts. It now boasts of a 90-room building that has grown out of the initial venture at a cost of Rs 2.5 crore and is now bidding for five-star rating. His younger brothers, Habibullah and Amin, started their own hotel venture sh with Tramboo Continental and are s to open their second, Hotel Pam the near future;

► Mohammad Jamal Siraj, K leading carpet tycoon, has staked derable sum on the hotel industry. he invested an estimated Rs renovating a rented building on B Road into a lavishly-decorated h Gulmarg and he now has three o on the drawing boards, scheduled opening;

► Abdul Ahdab Khanyari has his carpet and curio business of the first to enter the hotel b Hotel Boulevard 10 years ago. looking at new locations for exp

But the latest to join the quest is popularly known as Kashmir's seven", a consortium of seven ke ness families who also happen staunchest supporters of Chief Sheikh Abdullah. They have p sources and expertise to build a five-star hotel at Hari Niwas Boulevard with construction d 1983. The seven families are Tramboos, Matoos, Khanyaris, Batras and Dars who have leased plot of land from the state Gov set up their hotel, which

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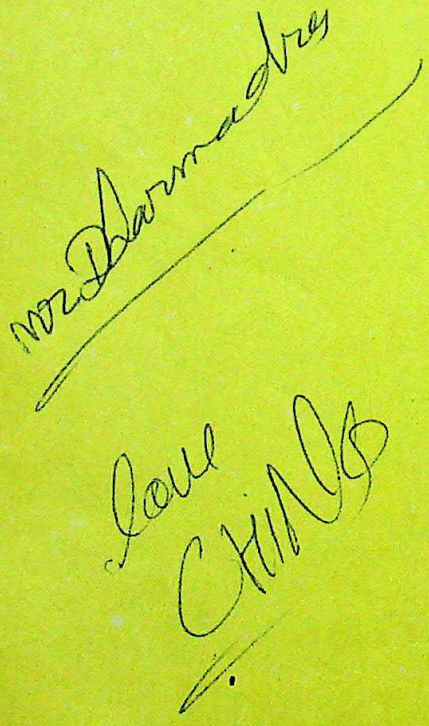

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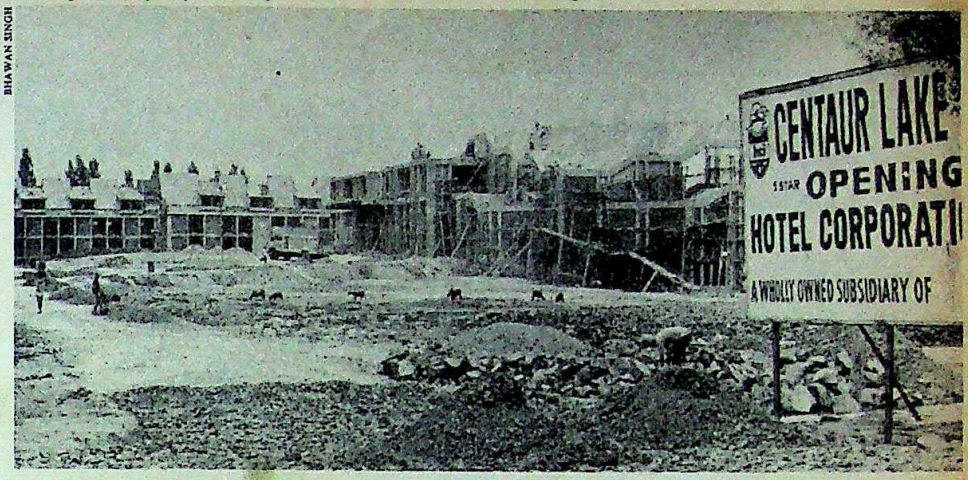
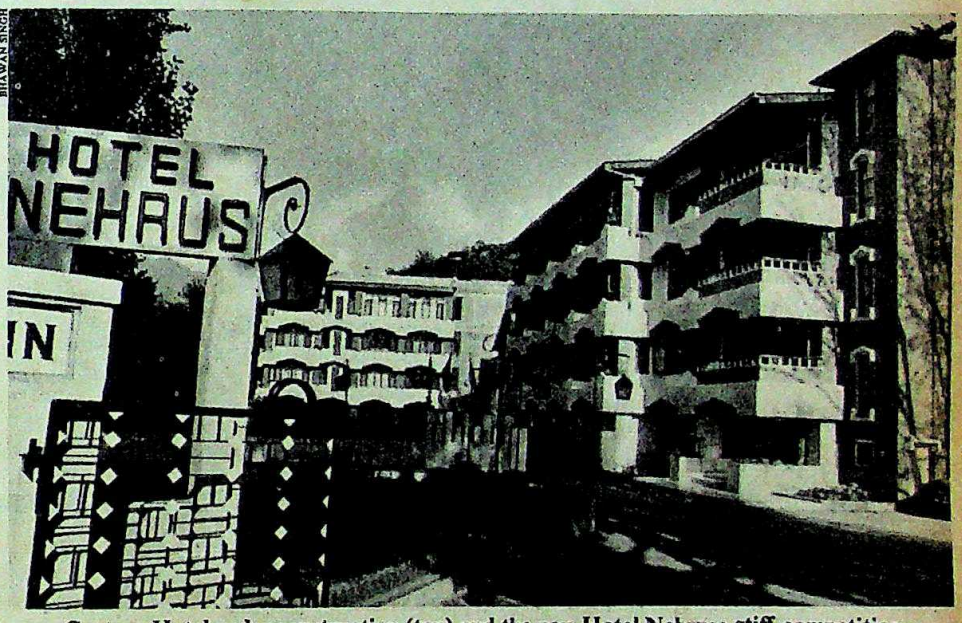


BHAWAN SINGH



BHAWAN SINGH

Centaur Hotel under construction (top) and the new Hotel Nehrus: stiff competition

crore venture.

Figures: But the boom could to be a bust. The hoteliers have based their calculations on the rise traffic, which is impressive enough. Kashmir played host to 45,541 in 1973, the figure had jumped to and by 1981, stood at 6,42,300 works out to an average growth rate 30 per cent a year. But the years have witnessed a steady, decline in the growth rate over year, from 36.2 per cent in 1977, cent in 1978, 10.1 per cent in 1979, per in 1980 and a slight rise to 8.3 in 1981.

the growth rate dropping steadily, boom is just starting and many feel that the glut could seriously business. Laments C.M. Nehru, partner in a hotel venture: "The of hotels have been growing at a rate year after year and it is affect the overall business. Most will have to close down, sell or their properties."

even that contains a catch. Since hoteliers have taken advantage of the ering terms offered by the state ent, they cannot shut up shop till have been paid off. According to of the J & K State Financial ion (JKSFC), loans for hotels are up to 70 per cent of the total cost or Rs 30 lakh, whichever is urrently, the Central Government a subsidy of 15 per cent on total on land and construction cost. path is smoothened even further erest subsidy provided by the state ent which works out to around 6 for the first seven years after the aken. "Even if the owners are at a loss, they will have to keep g till their debts are cleared," Dug, president of the Kashmir Restaurant Association (KHRA). the local hoteliers are also faced prospect of stiff competition from established and better known which include Air-India's 275-room Hotel opening next year and an-room J & K Tourism Develop-oration hotel due to open in 1984.

Assessment: Added to this is the most Srinagar hotels have a full rate for only three months of the rest of the time they either shut run on a skeleton staff. It is also that the state Government has been its largesse to prospective in a haphazard manner with no real analysis or planning behind their Warns P.L. Kachroo, deputy anager of the JKSFC: "The Tourism Department has been registering and approving new schemes without fully assessing the need for such hotels. The tourist arrival position, which is not healthy anyway, is no guide as far as the future fate of this industry is concerned."

And, if the current year is any indication, Kashmir's hotel boom may just end up whimpering. Tourist traffic for the first six months of the year has been disappointingly low and barring the chain-backed hotels like the Oberois, which have an international network, most hotels have reported depressingly low occupancy rates this year. There are, of course, other factors which could prick the state's hotel balloon. The most obvious one is the lack of professional management and expertise in a majority of the new ventures. Most of the upper echelons of the hotel trade are manned by family members and relatives of the owners, most of whom have a business background restricted to handicrafts or the carpet trade. Hotels, consequently, are just one of the fingers in the larger pie.

Says Chris Lag, general manager of the Oberoi Palace: "When you have a flourishing industry, you have to stick to it exclusively to see that it works." The lack of professionalism, and the proliferating competition, is visibly evident in the manner in which most hotels get their customers. Hordes of touts await each planeload of arrivals with fiendish glee and the moment a tourist steps down from the aircraft, he is surrounded by a screaming mob waving cards and brochures—hardly an impressive introduction to the state's hotel industry.

Admits Y.N. Madan, general secretary of KHRA: "The only way we can survive is to provide superior service to our clients but I can only introduce improvements when there is a promise of adequate returns. Right now, the prospects of that seem very bleak. We are, I fear, caught in a vicious circle."

—DILIP BOBB with RAMESH KAUL in Srinagar

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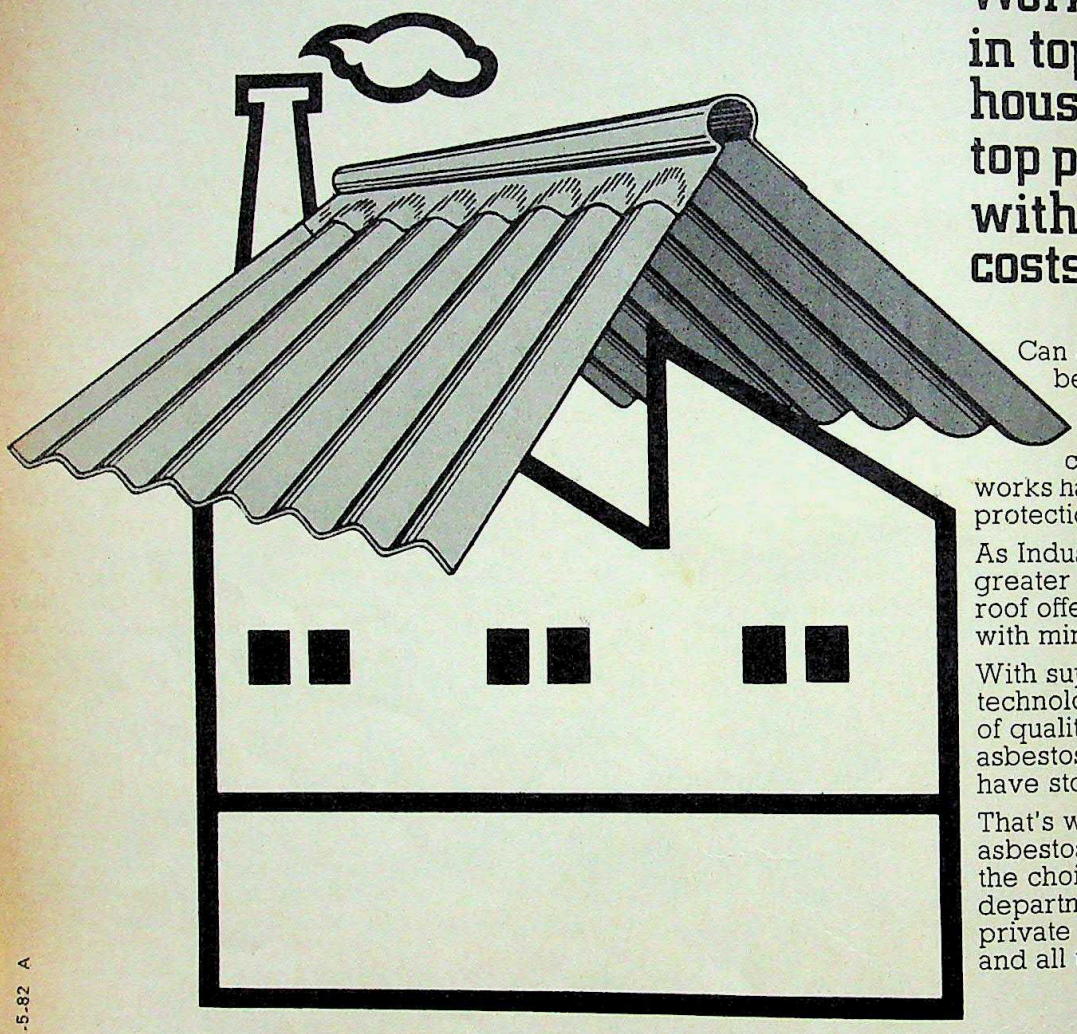
THE INDUSTRIOUS ROO



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JUDICE

ste Abuse

s a grim warning for all users of erate language, and particularly tizens of India who continue to t caste bestows special rights on ual. Untouchability has long ago abolished', but caste prejudice is one of insidious cankers eating into the vitals. At 4 p.m. on August 16, an Magistrate Thakur Dass livered a judgement in one of Patiala House court rooms that t considerable influence on such

av concluded that Captain Kuldip Mehra, 57, who is deputy director ns) and belongs to an Indian ve Grade 18, was guilty of having n Pal Jatav, 36, a transport assis- the corporation posted at Palam by addressing him as a *chuda* —a reflection on Jatav's cobbler e convict is not a previous convict ding a very responsible post," said So keeping in view all these facts I e opinion that the punishment of ment of one month rigorous ment and a fine of Rs 250 shall ends of justice." Though he is out he is imprisoned even for an hour, airline's rules, he could lose his job.

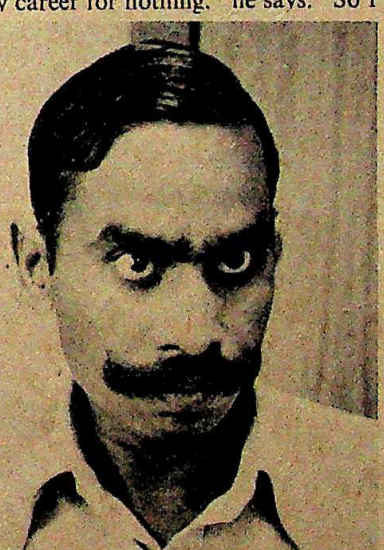
Roster: The incident that spar- *State versus Kuldip Chand Mehra* red on April 11, 1977. That after- av was shift in-charge and re- for arranging to pick up and drop bers of airline flights. Every day, ort department receives a printed ing the names of all crew members through the airport on that day. er carried the name of Captain H. arjee as the commander of Flight Srinagar. At the last moment, as it pired, Bhattacharjee was replaced

s Flight 424 landed, Mehra and his T. K. Sharma walked to the trans- ment, and Mehra brusquely as- for a car to take him home. "I told tfully that his name did not figure t," recalls Jatav, "and asked him at he had flown in on." Jatav that many crew members travel by hts as non-flying members, called Duty (SOD)'. Mehra was apparently because Jatav asked him whether that day.

ertheless," says Jatav, "I told Mehra that I would immediately a car to take him home." Still ever, Mehra allegedly launched into some round abuse. "*Kis b.....d ne tum chudon ko naukri di hai? Main tumhari naukri khatam kar doonga.*" Mehra yelled. (Which s.....gave you sweepers employment? I can get you sacked in no time).

Thereafter, Mehra, according to the case records, went upstairs to the Operations Movement Control and telephoned both the chief engineering manager and the regional director, but they were unavailable. Jatav says that Mehra eventually commandeered an airlines car, pushed its driver aside, and drove off. Jatav then made a detailed entry in his log book.

Formal Letter: At that time Mehra was also the administrative officer at Palam, and the following day he wrote a formal letter to the Chief Engineering Manager, Dharam Vir, complaining about Jatav's "misbehaviour". Jatav was summoned and hauled over the coals by Vir. At that point, he says, he became alarmed. "Captain Mehra could ruin my career for nothing," he says. "So I



Jatav: fighting for his rights

went to the lounge, borrowed paper and carbons, and wrote out a complaint."

The complaint was lodged with the inspector-in-charge of the Palam police chowki, Sahdev Sharma. Jatav alleges that Sharma deliberately prolonged his investigation, and so the official police First Information Report (FIR) was lodged only on August 20 that year, more than four months later.

On January 9, 1981, Jatav filed a complaint against Sharma himself, alleging that the inspector was thwarting the case's progress. The case against Mehra, meanwhile had begun some time in early 1978, under Section 7 (1) of the Protection of Civil Rights Act, and the hearings kept dragging on. Kashav was the third magistrate to hear the case. Public Prosecutor Gulab Singh Mehra had been specially assigned to Jatav's case because he, too, belonged to a Scheduled caste and government orders specify such "sympathetic" help. In April last year, however, prosecutor Mehra was arrested by the Anti-Corruption Branch of the Delhi Police because he was caught "red-handed" accepting a bribe of Rs 200.

Backtracking: Undaunted, Jatav is currently pursuing his complaint against the inspector and trying to get him listed as another accused in the case. The complaint states that after filing the FIR, Sharma back tracked by claiming on the witness stand that there were no eye-witnesses to the Mehra-Jatav fracas, although Jatav had produced four prosecution witnesses to back his case.

Jatav joined Indian Airlines in 1972 and has not been promoted even once. He says that the promotion rules were changed in 1977 to state that transport officers would need to hold diplomas or degrees in automobile engineering, a qualification Jatav lacks although he is a graduate. The bewhiskered Jatav, who lives in very lower-middle class area in Delhi's Karol Bagh, says that he has spent almost Rs 30,000 on the case, often taking leave without pay to appear in court. In May 1979, after hearing that Captain Mehra had been granted legal aid of Rs 4,400 by the airlines, Jatav wrote to his superiors requesting similar monetary help but was turned down.

When contacted by INDIA TODAY, Captain Mehra, who is now an Airbus commander and was promoted to his present post only in May this year, refused to discuss the case at length. But the pilot seems quite confident that his revision application against Kashav's verdict, pending now in the Sessions Court, will "vindicate" his stand.

Mehra refused to be photographed, saying: "Jatav belongs to the lowly Grade 3/6, miles below mine. How can you think of printing my photograph alongside that *chamar*'s on the same page of your magazine?" Claiming that all the witnesses had testified in his favour—actually only Inspector Sharma has turned hostile—Mehra said: "Kashav is also from a scheduled caste."

Mehra's militancy does not end there. He happens to be president of the Airlines Unreserved Staff Welfare Association (AUSWA) which seeks to "protect" the right of the upper castes against "the pernicious influences of reservations and favouritism for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes".

—CHAITANYA KALBAG

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JAGANNATH MISHRA

Bihar's Paper Tiger

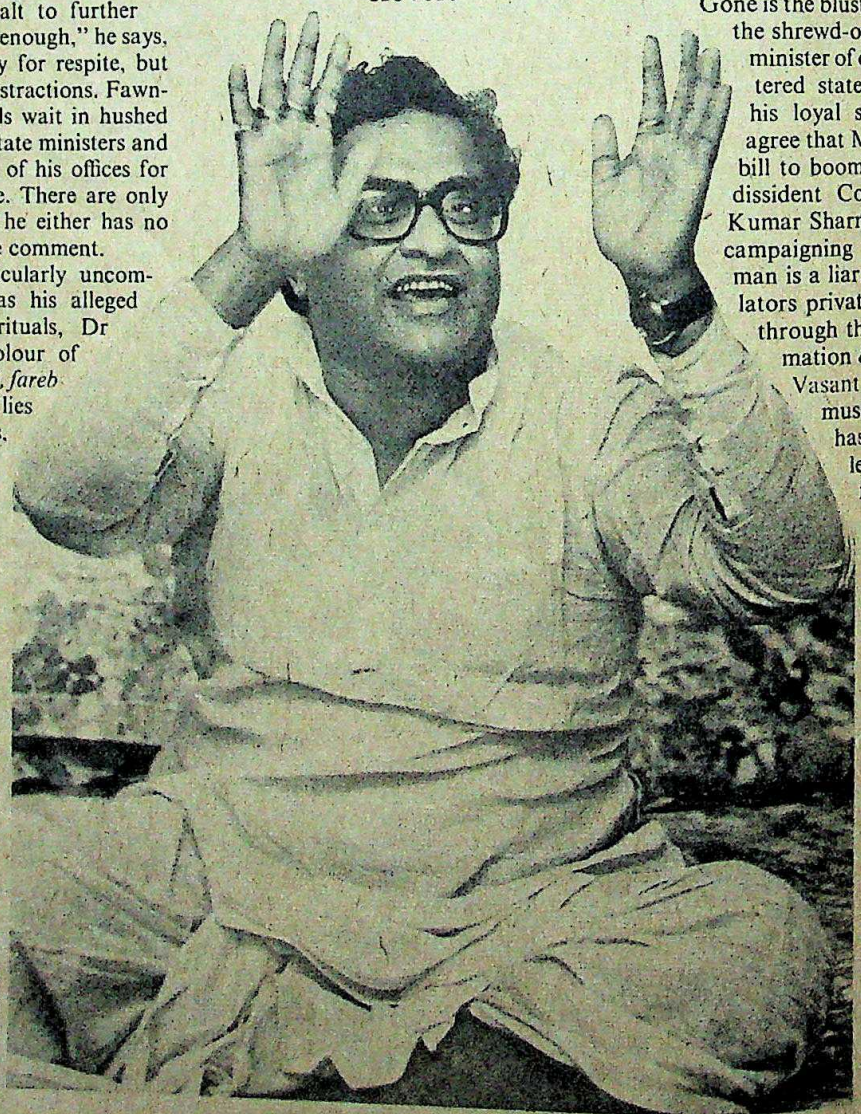
"THE PRESS Bill? I have nothing more to say about it. I have said all there was to say... but hasn't it created a sensation? Quite something... no one else has had the guts... it requires guts to get it through, you know?"

Between strangled giggles and gulps —like a drowning man coming up for air—Bihar's Chief Minister Dr Jagannath Mishra confronts visitors in his office. His pudgy hands, flashing six rings nervously, finger first one pen, then another. Greasy hair slicked back from a round, jowly face, his eyes shift from person to person, never meeting those of the interviewer. Every few minutes he grunts and uncomfortably moves his bulk in the chair, calling a halt to further question. "*Bas, bas*, that's enough," he says, looking around frantically for respite, but there are no comforting distractions. Fawning secretaries and officials wait in hushed silence for his reactions. State ministers and hangers-on line the edges of his offices for a few minutes of his time. There are only more questions to which he either has no answer, or flat predictable comment.

When asked a particularly uncomfortable question, such as his alleged obsession with tantric rituals, Dr Mishra's face turns a colour of deep chocolate. "*Fareb hai, fareb hai... sab fareb hai*" (Lies, lies ...it's all lies), he mutters, even more frantically shifty-eyed, like some desperately beleaguered form of caged ape in a travelling circus.

Phoney Bravura: There is a touch of gallows humour these days as his portly figure bustles out every morning in Patna to approach long benches of petitioners waiting for his *darshan* outside his official residence. There is a phoney bravura about his utterances as he sits in his office redecorated to resemble a suburban *mithai* shop—a false ceiling in ornamental plaster, walls panelled in mauve-coloured material, and a reading lamp more suitable for a starlet's bedroom. An unending stream of visitors in his chair-lined office wait to be summoned by a nod of his rotund face, a wave of a beringed finger, or simply a short, snappy grunt.

Mishra is also said to have inherited many of his brother's fetishes: for esoteric religious rituals, for 'fixing' files and documents, for unabashedly raising finance, and most of all for keeping his family and friends in clover.



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Today, Bihar's chief minister is trapped. As his notorious "anti-... hangs fire in New Delhi for the Government's assent, the nation-wide has aroused has cornered the wily ... of Patna in the most controversial ... his political career. Today the very ... he hoped to retain forever is threatened as the Bihar agitation mounts into ... movement, Mishra's raj prevails ...

Only a few months ago, th... different. Mishra was behaving ... man possessed; convinced of his ... against the media, he had been ... putting the finishing touches to ... borate scheme he believed would ... the most potent opposition in the ... the press. He was breathing ... brimstone, taking out massive ad... ments in newspapers propagating ... issuing statements and addressing ... conferences to propound his ca...

Nervous reactions such as ... all that Mishra is capable of the... Gone is the bluster, the tough-g... the shrewd-operator tactics of ... minister of one of the worst-a... tered states in the country. ... his loyal supporters in the ... agree that Mishra did not ... bill to boomerang so violently ... dissident Congress(I) MLA ... Kumar Sharma, who has been ... campaigning against Mishra ... man is a liar. He assured many ... lators privately that he was ... through the bill with Uni... mation & Broadcasting ... Vasant Sathe's approval ... must pay for his mis... has never taken the ... legislature party ... fidence on any ... alone the press.

Even se... cials of the Bi... vernment today ... that the anti-... agitation the... Bihar has been ... for widespread ... vances among ... 70 million ... rampant corru... maladministra... creasing ... backwardness ... cial bigotry ... like the ... blindings, gro... cities and mis... tion of state ...

Mishr...

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...f funds have reduced life in Bihar ...rish ordeal. "Welcome to hell," ...ting a foreign journalist was met ...he recently called upon the editor ...*Indian Nation*, Patna's premier ...ily.

...in the consciousness of not only ...but those who live there, has ...the image of some terrible geog- ...berration, a grim backwater that ...deeper into its morass of collective ...er chief minister Abdul Ghafoor, ...dependent MLA, agrees that things ...ed a nadir in Bihar: "True, there ...ys corruption, casteism and in- ...before but Jagannath Mishra's ...ent seems to have institutionalised ...things." But Mishra himself argues ...rruption is everywhere—not any ...Bihar than in Uttar Pradesh."

...the Urban Cooperative Bank ...pending judgement in the Supreme ...harassment of senior officials to an ...nion Home Ministry probe into his ...a complete charge-sheet of misdemeanours see box. along- ...ra and his government has been ...scandal ever since he became chief ...for the second time in June 1980. ...of the bureaucracy are so demora- ...Bihar due to repeated transfers and ...promotion of corrupt officials that ...administration has virtually ...standstill, paralysing an already ...machinery. Mishra's political col- ...his family, friends from his com- ...of Maithali Brahmins, have been ...afforded sinecures. As Mishra ...in office, his family and friends ...to prosper.

...ically, those who knew him at ear- ...es of his life, have contrary im- ...of the man. They remember him as ...nocuous professor of economics, ...der the thumb of his oldest brother, ...r railway minister, the late Lalit ...ishra. Lalitbabu was the towering ...of the family—a legendary fund- ...for 15 years—and Jagannath his ...rother back in Patna entered state ...to suit his needs and demands. ...was the wheeler-dealer incarnate ...nath, entering the Bihar cabinet as ...minister in 1972, used to leave the ...ide to him. "He was never a ...ticket or a simple man but he wasn't ...operator then," says a Patna ...who knew him well in the mid-

...s Choice: It was after Lalitbabu's ...January 1975 in the Samastipur ...that Jagannath became Mrs ...obvious choice for chief minister- ...a characteristic choice: she knew the family well and was assured of their loyalty; moreover Jagannath was prone to easy control. He was not as shrewd as his brother but politically more pliable. Says Dr Mishra today of his elder brother: "He was the greatest influence in my life... if it wasn't for him I would be nobody." His official bio-data plugs the point further by pompously claiming "...Dr Mishra has inherited the legacy of Lalitbabu's eager desire to see Bihar at par with the front line states of India." Having cast himself in the mould of his revered elder brother, Mishra sees himself as his legitimate political successor, and the scion of the Mishra family's political authority. He has also inherited many of his brother's fetishes: for esoteric religious rituals, for "fixing" files and documents, for unabashedly raising finance, and most of all for keeping his family and friends in clover.

Almost the first controversy that embroiled him when he became minister in 1972 was his involvement in the Urban Cooperative Bank scandal, a phoney bank, that he had allegedly helped set up. During both his terms as chief minister he tried to smother the affair, and at present the decision to reopen the case, which he had had withdrawn last year, lies with the Supreme Court. The protracted affair, has dogged Mishra all his political career despite his frantic efforts to close it.

THERE was a time, for example, that he actually professed great regard and affection for journalists. He was protected by Emergency restrictions on the media during his first tenure as chief minister from 1975–77 and later Mishra was an avid cultivator of the Patna press during the Janata Party rule. "He would frequently drop into the office for a chat," admits a news agency chief in Patna, "his public relations with the media was always excellent. It was only when he became chief minister again in 1980 and the exposures about his regime began that the attitude began to change."

In fact, the scale of his wheeling-dealing apparently also grew during his second term as chief minister. Alleges Sudhir Kumar Mishra, his nephew who has now broken away from him to join the Sanjay Vichar Manch: "I remember that during his first chief ministership he was always running out of cash—he would occasionally borrow the odd hundred rupees. And the Janata days were so bad that he would not have money to pay for five litres of petrol." Adds opposition leader Karpoori Thakur: "He always had the mentality of a feudal overlord, but this time he has surpassed all limits. Now his only ambition seems to be is to achieve enough security for himself and his family for the next few generations."

Mishra's life-style has not been especially modest. Though he neither drinks nor smokes, his manner is not exactly underplayed. From the loud, checked silk waistcoats he sports—even in blistering Bihar summers—to the fancy chappals he buys in the corridors of New Delhi's Connaught Place and the hideous colour schemes he favours for his rooms—pink walls and pink satin drapes—there is a flashiness in his manner. The khadi dhoti-kurtas are as fake

ALLEGATIONS

APART from the Urban Cooperative Bank scandal, following are some of the charges levelled against Jagannath Mishra and his Government:

► Last year opposition leader Karpoori Thakur alleged that the Union Home Ministry conducted an enquiry against him. Specifically, Thakur claimed, the charges were the Bihar Cabinet's decision to raise the price of spirit from 0.75 paise a litre to Rs 1.80 a litre—an unprecedented rise.

► The Bihar Government has pumped over Rs 1,321 crore in public undertakings but their cumulative loss has crossed Rs 200 crore.

► That Mishra scrapped sales tax on eleven items—including chappals and cosmetics—without giving substantial reasons.

► Mishra has also repealed the Passenger Goods Transport Act after transporters launched an agitation this year. The loss of revenue estimated is between Rs 15–20 crore annually.

► The most prevalent allegation against Mishra and his regime is the never-ending transfer of police officers and civil servants to lucrative positions. It is estimated that the average tenure of an IAS officer in Bihar, who number some 350, is no more than 11 months in a single job. The average tenure for an IPS officer, of which there are about 125 in the state is even less: nine months.

► Senior officials of the IPS are so demoralised by Mishra's actions, that the seniormost officer in the service, Sudhish Narain Singh, has challenged his supersession in the High Court and may follow up his challenge in the Supreme Court.

► Forty-five IAS officers face corruption charges by the Vigilance Department.

► Fifty per cent of political pensioners in Bihar are said to be bogus.

► All of the 33 special schemes instituted by the Government like the social security pension scheme are alleged to be major conduits of revenue leaking and totally non-productive.

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as the tongue-clicking platitudes fed to the rows of petitioners waiting on benches for him.

The greatest of Mishra's kinks are his bizarre religious beliefs, his devoted espousal of astrologers, tantrics and godmen of that ilk. Although he steadfastly denies these connections and says he believes "in no one but God" one blatant evidence is the six rings flashing on his pudgy fingers—two large diamonds among the assortment—that change according to the changing confluence of his ruling planets.

His jewelled fingers, however, pale into insignificance compared to the outrageous stories about the devout practices he is said to advocate—the most preposterous claim being that earlier this year he witnessed the sacrifice of 108 goats in a tantric temple on the Uttar Pradesh-Bihar border, completing the exercise by bathing in the cascade of blood. "How can I do such a thing when I am a vegetarian myself?" gasps an alarmed Mishra when asked if the incident is true.

Superstitious: Still, stories of his devotion to a band of ritualists abound, often supported by his own superstition-ridden habits. Sudhir Mishra, the erring nephew who has been kicked out the chief minister's camp and was arrested while participating in the journalists' rally last fortnight insists that the stories about the tantrics are true. "If you were to put on a few beads and dress in funny clothes and send word to his bungalow that a new tantric is in town, he will come rushing for consultations." Sudhir also alleges that stories about how the chief minister has beaten all records in feathering his own and his family's nest for their combined future are true. Says he: "Either he has some long-term megalomaniac vision of his political future or he wants to make enough money to retire." Sudhir Mishra's disobedience campaign may be a case of sour grapes—it is alleged that he was keen to be made or MP—but it is certain that closer [illegible] chief minister have done quite well since he assumed office.

The brother just older to [illegible] called Mritunjaya Mishra—known [illegible] Babu—was once a humble [illegible] officer with the Life Insurance Corp[illegible] After a bad start in politics—he [illegible] the 1977 assembly elections as [illegible] pendent against Congress(I)—he [illegible] sent a director of the Bihar State M[illegible] Cooperative Union (BISCOMAN), of [illegible] State Financial Corporation, [illegible] poration of India and the Bank of [illegible] brother older than him is Shya[illegible] Mishra—better known as Jalebi Ba[illegible] has been chosen *mukhiya* (headma[illegible] the village of Balua Bazar this year. [illegible] the appointment may sound hum[illegible] crucial for the Mishra clan to co[illegible] landed interests and apparently Ja[illegible]

BIHAR

Rule Of The Rod

THE AGITATION in Bihar against Jagannath Mishra's 'black' press bill drew first blood last fortnight. Over 500 journalists from all over Bihar had assembled in Patna on August 21 for a convention to ponder the bill. They set out on a seven-kilometre peaceful protest march to the Raj Bhavan. As they walked down Baily Road the police attacked: senior journalists and editors writhed and rolled about in pain on the road as the lathis rained down on the defenceless marchers, barely a furlong away from Mishra's residence. Some 38 journalists sustained bleeding injuries, a dozen were seriously injured, and about 200 were put under arrest, without food and medical aid.

It was the most ruthless action the Government had taken yet against the pressmen and the following day the papers cried out in anguish. Said *The Indian Nation*, a leading English daily edited by Deenanath Jha, who had fainted under the lathi blows: "The brutal, unprovoked lathi charge was more unexpected and stunning than the anti-press bill itself." *The Searchlight*, another leading English newspaper, commented: "It has once again brought to the surface an ugly face of the Government—it will go to any extent to suppress dissent."

Pre-planned Attack: It was clear that the authorities—it is reported that the attack was planned in Mishra's house—had decided to teach the media a lesson. The police, armed to the teeth with lathis and guns, had spread out across the road to block the progress of the procession beyond the railway crossing near the new secretariat complex, a prohibited zone. They came down heavily on the journalists without any warning or without declaring it unlawful. They seemed to have been tutored thoroughly in their job of smashing heads, and did not even spare Bharatiya Janata Party legislator Lalmuni Choubey who was passing by and tried to save the injured journalists.

KRISHNA MOHAN SHARMA

The brutal lathi charge on Bihar journalists in Patna: unprovoked attack

Informed sources say that [illegible] himself earmarked some journalists [illegible] favoured treatment. In a shameful [illegible] to the action, a press note the next [illegible] justified the police action saying that [illegible] journalists had brought it upon [illegible] selves by brick-batting the police. [illegible] Mishra affirmed that some "misgu[illegible] journalists and opposition leaders [illegible] planned it all. The brick-batting [illegible] nailed by Superintendent of Police [illegible] Chander Khan's statement immediately after the beating which did not mention brick-batting at all. A senior police officer later told INDIA TODAY: "We do not know who thought up this brick-batting theory."

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...his duties well.
...fourth brother, Kamalnarain ...ectionately called Ladoo Babu ...ractor but it is widely alleged that ...as a commission agent on behalf ...minister brother.
...h Jagannath's own six children ...atively young—the eldest son is ...ering student in Delhi and the ...ghter is married—they have on ...been the subject of allegations. Last ...claimed by the Patna University ...Union that the B.A. (Hons.) exam- ...economics had been rigged to ...chief minister's second daughter, ...to obtain the second place from ...the results. It was alleged that she ...been an exceptionally brilliant ...and to make matters appear normal ...had there been an inordinate num- ...dents obtaining first divisions but ...had deliberately been placed second so that the "fixing" did not seem obvious.

His nephew, Ranjit Mishra, son of Shyamanarain has featured in a scandal involving the Bihar State Electricity Board's (BSEB) issuing of unfair contracts to a Bombay manufacturer. And Shyamanarain himself is mentioned in opposition leader Karpoori Thakur's long list of allegations as being instrumental in getting mechanical engineers appointed in jobs reserved for civil engineers.

Prospering: Despite the welter of charges against him and his government, the Mishras of Balua Bazar in north Bihar 500 km from Patna continue to prosper. Till 1977 not a single member of the clan owned property in Patna; today all three of the chief minister's brothers have acquired a small house each. Prosperity is evident among Dr Mishra's personal staff as well. His private secretary, Indukant Mishra, who handles his schedules, has built a house in the Kankarbagh suburb of patna this year. So has his personal security officer. Even Dr Hargovind Singh, who was Mishra's academic guide, and who, it has been said, virtually ghost-wrote his doctoral thesis, was first made director of a social sciences research institute in Patna, and an MLC last year when it became impossible for him to get further extensions.

When he began his campaign to intimidate the press, Mishra's primary motive was to guarantee his own regime. "He probably thought he could kill two birds with a stone: gag the local press and ingratiate himself into Mrs Gandhi's good books by setting an example of his efficiency," says the editor of a Patna newspaper. "Instead, he finds himself undefended by both the ruling party in the state or the Centre." But if Mishra goes, he will probably be carried out crying: "*Yeh sab fareb hai . . .*"

—SUNIL SETHI in Patna

Continuing Struggle: The press has ...ed violently to the charge. Said Jha: ...s only added insult to injury." The ...n Committee of Journalists which ...ept politicians out of the movement ...ed in a statement: "Our's is a ...nalists' struggle directed solely agai- ...e black bill and as soon as the bill is ...ed the struggle will automatically ... Patna observed a spontaneous ba- ...n August 23 which evoked a ma- ...esponse. Editors' Guild Chairman ...ay rushed to Patna to express ...arity with the journalists. Bihar ...nor A.R. Kidwai told a delegation ...e Bihar Working Journalists Union ...he was shocked to hear about the ...ng up of journalists. Lok Dal ...ur) chief Karpoori Thakur warned ...Hitlerism' was in the offing.

...Mishra himself seems to have lost his ...ce. On August 2, a similar pro- ...n of journalists demonstrated un- ...ed at the Assembly complex, and ...ce they obviously thought that the ...e cordon would politely part to let ...through. But three weeks of agit- ...and anger have frayed the chief ...er's nerves; he flexed his muscles ...during the bandh when even ...boys felt the lathis. Police also ...ed up his nephew Sudhir Kumar ..., now in the Maneka Gandhi ... among others.

...highly placed police officer warned ...ely that: "Mishra wants a total ...raj in the state." Mishra himself ...a warning in true gangland style: ...ently hope that all sensible persons ...ave unwittingly joined the agitation ...ull out of it." There are few chances ...a fervent wish will be granted.

ASHOK KARAN

Injured journalist Singh: ruthless suppression of dissent

As the agitation against the press bill in the aftermath of the brutal lathi charge on journalists assumed the proportions of a 1974-type movement, the Mishra Government turned desperate. Mishra and his henchmen launched a drive to "buy support" and the first to rally round him were a group of nine "pliable" Urdu editors headed by Dr Khalid Rashid Saba, editor of Urdu daily *Saathi* and a Congress(I) MLC. But soon even Urdu journalists condemned them as self-seekers.

Sponsored Dharna: When Mishra found that his editors had been isolated and his game exposed he asked some party leaders to organise a dharna under the banner of All India Newspaper Readers' Association on August 16 in which a deputy minister played a leading role and about 1,000 food packets were distributed. Since it failed to draw any support, the Government allegedly sponsored another dharna by self-styled journalists to coincide with the rally of the trade unions. It was led by the Bihar Working Journalists Union which had not been very hostile towards the Government.

The dharna in favour of the press bill on August 25 was launched under the auspices of the Bihar State Small and Medium Scale Newspapers Association. The participants claimed they were editors of dailies and weeklies so far unknown to the readers. State party Secretary Digvijay Pratap Singh and other Congress(I) workers drafted from the nearby rural areas became a laughing stock when they shouted slogans like "Implement the press bill!' though it is yet to become an act.

To add to the comedy, an old man went on an indefinite fast to get the bill implemented and as night fell a Congress(I) leader rushed to him to get the fast broken, saying that the Government had accepted the demand. It was not the end. On August 26, the Government employed four state buses to bring about 50 Government lawyers from the High Court to hold a demonstration and a procession of the lawyers who carried a banner which read "Practice Healthy Journalism". The state Bar Council, however, condemned them. The pros and cons of Mishra's beloved bill will, in the days to come, become increasingly a acrimonious. —FARZAND AHMED in Patna

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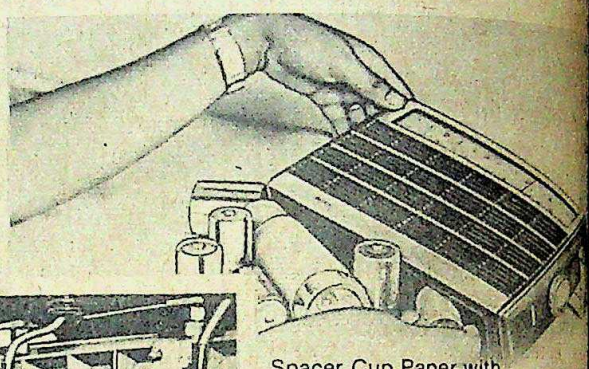

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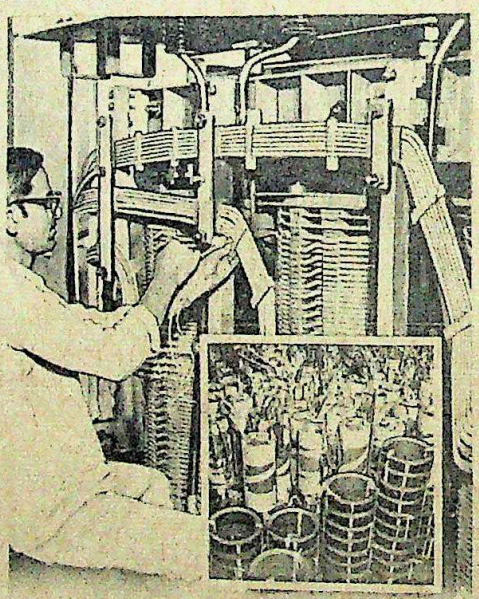

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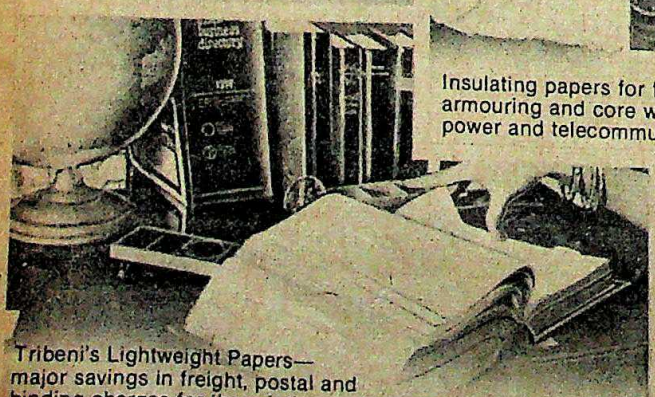

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e Pressure Point

ENDING a title is a lot more ifficult than winning it, as Prakash dukone discovered in Hyderabad when he lost the Indian Masters ip title he had won at Pune was introduced last year. Inevitably, ures for the second World Cup ship, beginning in Kuala Lumpur mber 15, to defend the title he won augural championship last year, rowing speculation at home on e Indian badminton ace has lost

e Indian Masters, Padukone in the quarter finals, losing l dark horse, the 19-year-old n Icuk Sugiarto. The 61-ncounter began on an exciting Sugiarto matching Padukone point for the scores to reach ght in the first game. Then Padu-ched four quick points for a slender Sugiarto did not give in and took in a row to make the score 12-all however, won the game 15-12.

in the second game Sugiarto Padukone as the Indian seemed one stage when the score was 3-1, changed 10 times before Sugiarto, fine whipcord smashes, turned 's loose and hesitant returns into points. The Indonesian won the game 15-2 and asserted a crushing aking the clinching game 15-4. As odd spectators gave Sugiarto a e standing ovation at the Fateh ndoor stadium, a Padukone sup-marked: "Andhra Pradesh is not hunting ground. This is the third losing here in as many years. He Modi at Vijayawada in 1980 and sian Sartika here last year."

Victory: As for Sugiarto, he got Stefan Karlsson into the finals, fellow Indonesian Luis Pongoh games. In fact, the 22-year-old the championship and collected (Rs 24,750) cash prize without game. British bank clerk Jane 6, who threatened to carry back um from the championship, was ough with the ladies singles title 50 (Rs 22,275).

start of the five-day champion-Badminton Association of India siastically declared that there foreign internationals than at the ers, but the £14,000 (Rs 2,31,000) ey contest lacked quality. Pon-victory, notwithstanding his calibre—he had defeated Padukone twice—clearly showed that the Indian Masters is just an opportunity for the lesser lights to make some money and notch up a few points for the international ratings. The Chinese, who reached both the men's and ladies' singles finals at Pune, were conspicuously absent, as were all-England champion Morten Frost of Denmark and the temperamental Indonesian Liem Swie King.

Padukone: losing his touch?

The canny Chinese, like the Indonesians, play a game packed with power and pace and are reportedly waiting for the Asian Games in November to convince the badminton world that their victory over Indonesia in the Thomas Cup finals earlier this year was no flash in the pan. They are undoubtedly a formidable side and Padukone runs into Luan Jin, the all-England losing finalist, in the pool matches at Kuala Lumpur and another Chinese challenger, Han Jian in the later knock-out stage of the World Cup contest. Jian will undoubtedly be keen to avenge his defeat by Padukone last year. The Indian ace is understandably cautious about his prospects; says he: "It is a tough fight with many challengers, and I hope to do well."

Dispute: With Danish clubs closed for the annual vacation in recent weeks, Padukone joined the Asiad probables at the Udaipur coaching camp to keep himself in competitive trim before the Indian Masters. His presence stirred the BAI to press for his inclusion in the Indian squad for the Asiad. There is no doubt that without Padukone India cannot hope for even a bronze medal against Malaysia, Japan and Thailand. The contest for the gold and silver medals will be between the Chinese and Indonesians.

Ever since Padukone left for Copenhagen in December 1980 to play with a club, he has been branded as a professional and therefore cannot play for India in the Asian or Olympic Games. There is a debate on whether collecting money as a licensed player disqualifies him from being an amateur. The International Badminton Federation is taking the case up with the International Olympic Committee on the plea that a licensed player is closer to being an amateur than a professional.

BAI President Fazil Ahmed feels confident that it has a good case. "If Padukone as a licensed player cannot take part, all those who play against him should also be debarred," he remarked. This peculiar logic of two wrongs making a right only show that the BAI has realised that without Padukone in the squad, it is more than likely that the Indian medal tally at the Asian Games in November will be without any contribution from the badminton contingent.

—AMARNATH K. MENON

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HELENE CURTIS

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The archers prepare to shoot: big ma

ARCHERY

Target For Taxmen

"*KHREH lai minnat!*" (three minutes from now), shouts Nongbri and concentrates on his wrist-watch. Thirty-six arrows shoot forth: leaving bamboo cane bows they converge from a semi-circle on to a straw target, cylindrical and vaguely resembling the Buddhist prayer-wheel. More volleys follow as Nongbri goes on shouting commands in Khasi, announcing completion of every 25 seconds. Three minutes, and each archer has shot 32 arrows. Hundreds of onlookers and archers, all high on *kakiat* (the local brew), rush for the target, now a huge hedgehog with hundreds of arrows stuck all over. The count begins.

The scene is enacted twice every evening in a narrow, bowl-shaped valley 10 km down the Shillong-Gauhati highway and also at Khanapara, Jawai and Mawphlang and other places in the countryside. And as the 12 teams of three archers each from various localities of Shillong take aim in a drunken stupor, the fates of over 20,000 bettors and the disposal of over Rs 2 lakh is also decided. In Shillong alone the annual stake is about Rs 5 crore, the figure being Rs 12–15 crore per year for the whole of Meghalaya.

Betting: The busiest booths in Shillong markets in the morning are the ones selling innocent little slips of paper bearing vague figures. As the sun sets—which it does early in the Khasi Hills—these booths are again the most crowded with people awaiting word from the shooting ground. The betting is on precisely how many arrows, out of 1,152 shot by the 36 archers, would hit the target. The winner takes a thousand for every rupee bet. The most ordinary odds offered to a bettor are 80 to 1. The person who can forecast correctly the number of hits in both rounds in a day stands to win the bumper prize of Rs 16,000 for his one rupee bet. (The prize money varies with individual bookies).

Tir is the traditional betting game of the Khasi-Jaintia tribals. It is Meghalaya's own *matka* and the state Government has now decided not only to legalise it but also to tax it. In its session ending last month, the Meghalaya Assembly adopted a bill amending the Meghalaya Amusements And Betting Tax Act. It regularised arrow betting, slapping a 5 per cent tax on the daily collections (Rs 2 lakh to Rs 2.5 lakh) and laid down its own rules for the game. While the bill awaits sanction of the Governor—who is likely to say yes—the powerful *tir* lobby has made it clear to the Government that it will accept taxes and other conditions but not the proposed changes in the rules and procedure.

John Roberts Fancon, president, is clearer in his thinking: "The Government

The target riddled with arrows: prickly issue

asks us to use a circular target with centric circles and a bull's eye. There varying points for hitting each circle happens if you hit the line? We do not complications. We are meeting the chief minister to make it clear." betting in the Khasi Hills dates back says Fancon who works in the day Anthony's College in Shillong. In the he takes charge of the Jaiaw archery

Ill-effects: The game has been at the present site since 1962 under a bookies' association. In 1970 the Meg Prevention Of Gambling Act was stop it as *tir* was being increasingly obsessive betting had driven small holders to bankruptcy and starvation only did the Act fail to serve its spawned a mafia of toughs and book trolling the business and running with the complicity of the police. soon diversified its activities (taki petty, and then major, crime in and Shillong and other places like Ma and Jowai (Jaintia Hills). The new belated effort to break their hold.

The economics of the busines teresting. Of the average of Rs collected daily, Rs 12,000 are dis among the participating clubs. Each takes home Rs 35 per day. Clubs pay contribution for the upkeep of the arena which is, in any case, full of w and mud. More than a lakh of ru distributed among the winners and gobbled up by bookies and the m trolling the business.

Control: Among the things go seeks to regulate is the frequen competition, reducing it to three week. But "Sunday off" is the trade is prepared to concede. Says "The Government wants taxes not let others earn. What can you three days a week?"

Most archers—men given to with no other means of livelihood—the Act. Said Decent Lyngdoh *pawnam:* "At least now the Govern buy us fibreglass bows out of the should also fix our wages. Some of went to the national archery compe year and saw fibreglass equipm which you can shoot five times the moment, most archers depend craftsmen in far-flung villages, Nonkynrieh, 50 km from Shillong

But chances are that, given the of the *tir* syndicate, the Act will reduced to some sort of a contra the Government and the bookies other participants left out, just game in the middle.

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The Swire Group

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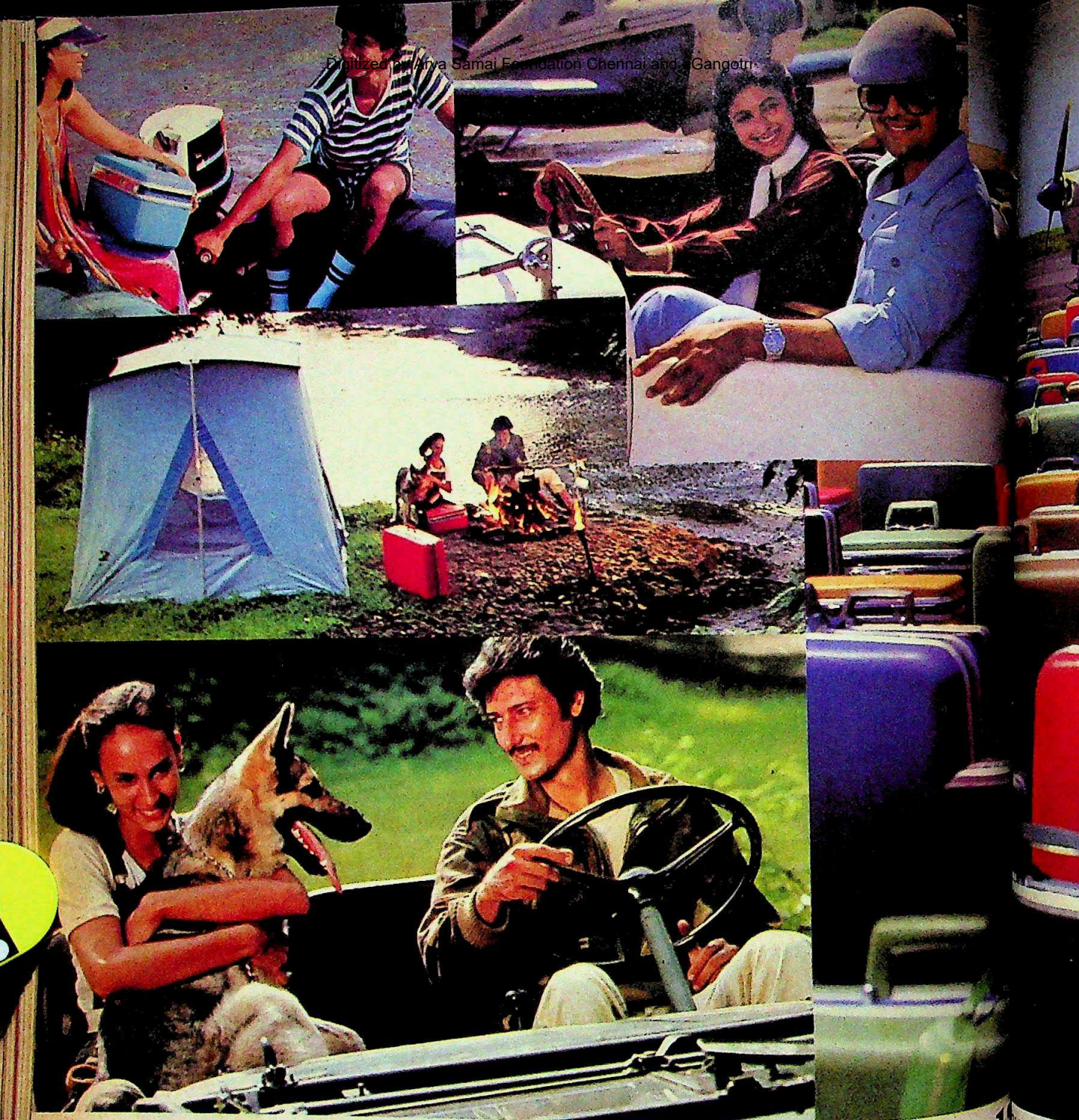

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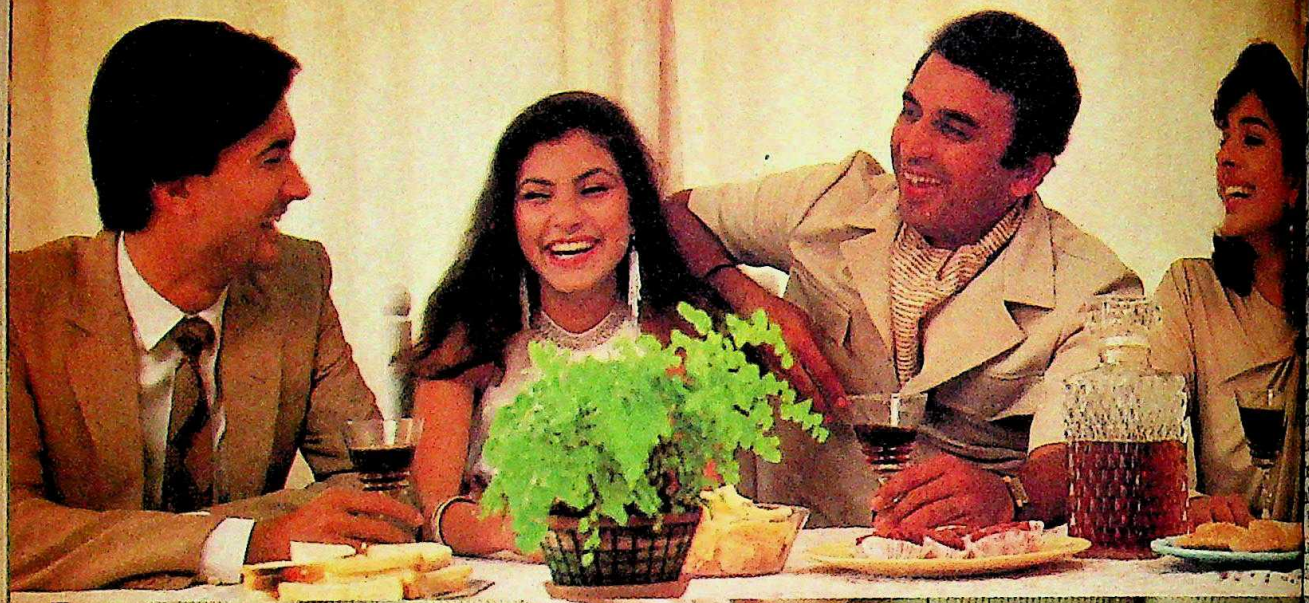

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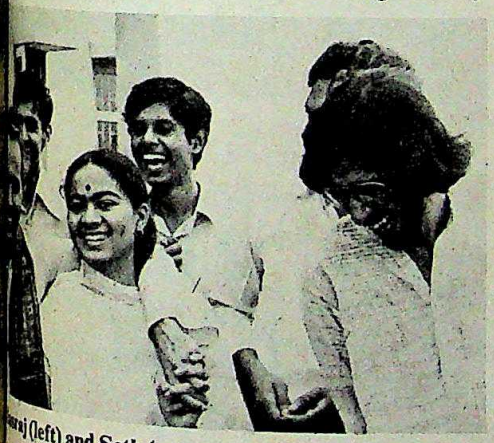
MACAY

ose Encounters

T month in Bhopal, around 2,000 dents from three colleges were trea- to Kathak virtuoso Sitara Devi, Pandit Jasraj and violinist M. for free. For a large part of the udience, it was their closest en- et with leading exponents of the g arts. And it marked a major step in an experiment conducted by a n organisation, Society for Pro- f Indian Classical Music and Cul- ng Youth—Spic-Macay for short. p, winner of the Sanskriti Award is engaged in bringing the country's es to universities where students h and hear them without payment. group's success is the result of an le combination—student enthu- acked by helpful artistes. In an Seth, 33, a former student of an Institute of Technology (IIT), ur returned after six years in the e up an assistant professorship at While studying at Columbia Uni- e had attended a concert by the others, and though unfamiliar with lassical music, had then decided to



araj (left) and Seth (extreme right): students' success

e performing arts to university n India.

: In 1977 together with three Mahendra Malu and Arjun both company executives, and a, a student of Delhi's Hindu e started to work out the details. e of the group was crucial," says d, long-haired Seth who normally icity. Though admitting that Spic- ands westernised, he argues: "We omething that would catch student t—to catch their interest. We group to be the 'in' thing and to a ent we have succeeded."

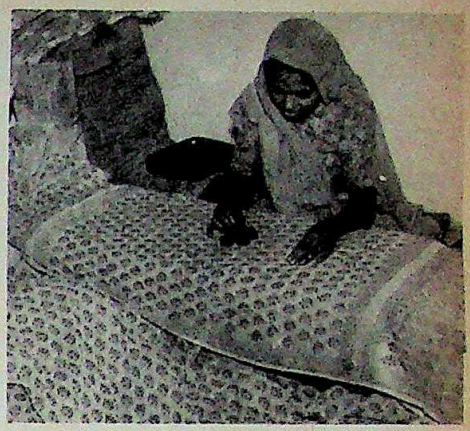
The first performance in early 1978 was a disaster. The Dagar brothers agreed to perform on a nominal payment in IIT, Delhi in an auditorium that could seat 1,500. Not having been able to advertise properly on the meagre budget of Rs 5,000, only 50 seats were occupied. A year later, having learnt a lesson, they organised a two-night festival and offered anyone who could bring in advertisements a 20 per cent commission. The festival which featured the Dagar brothers, Shahid Parvez, Bismillah Khan and Amjad Ali Khan was a resounding success.

Another of Spic-Macay's schemes was fated to fail at first. In 1979, the Dagar brothers agreed to organise a workshop which 300 students attended on the first day. By the eighth and final sitting not more than a dozen were present. Later that year, however, they changed the programme and organised a series of lecture-demonstrations. With six prominent artistes taking part, explanations were made during the performance itself.

Since then, Spic-Macay has been growing steadily but raising funds is still a struggle, in spite of government funds. Although this year's budget is Rs 3.5 lakh, an organiser said : "We are never very certain till the last moment how we are going to manage—but somehow we do get by." This year has been the most encouraging. The festival in 24 colleges and 10 cities, stretching from Sonepat in the north to Mara in the south, with two dozen of the country's biggest names in music and dance, was impressive. The performance played to an estimated 15,000 students. And now Bhopal is the third city to have the lecture-demonstration series.

Spic-Macay's success was recently endorsed by Pandit Jasraj, who performed for them for nothing more than his air fare: "In my public performances in Delhi, I now find a lot of young people who pay money to listen. I am sure that a lot of them are there because Spic-Macay first provided them an opportunity to get acquainted with music." Seth's experiment, which now has hundreds of students involved in it, has taken on the form of a movement infused with crusading zeal.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR



A worker block printing cloth: weakened commitment to the art

SANGANER

A Dying Tradition

SANGANER, once a city bustling with creativity, has now been reduced to despondency and inactivity. A little village on the outskirts of Jaipur, Sanganer was famous for producing the best and most exquisite hand printed cloth—a tradition that had been maintained over 150 years. But over the last two years, the passion to make a fast buck has obliterated the artisans' age-old commitment to their art, driving it almost out of existence.

Not long ago, Sanganer was a riot of colour with long sheets of cloth hung outside every house to dry in the morning sun. Export orders were soaring and high demands kept the artisans on their toes. From meagre earnings of Rs 25 a day earlier they now received Rs 100 a day when orders worth lakhs of metres started pouring in. Today they are jobless and have left the once rich climes of Sanganer for other neighbouring areas.

The gradual downfall came when artisans started palming off substandard cloth and prints to an eager and unsuspecting foreign market. Since block printing was a tedious process, the artisans, under the illusion that their foreign clients would never know the difference, switched to screen printing. The importers caught on and reduced their orders, bringing down exports to an all-time low this year. During the peak export phase in the late '70s, about 50,000 metres of printed cloth was produced daily, out of which 90 per cent was exported. Today hardly 5,000 metres are produced daily and just about 50 per cent exported.

New Lease: With business slumping, a few printers that were left behind have

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need to revert to block print- quality is not the same and lost their touch. Says Ram , one of the big time printers export market at one stage: way to get back into business is to lock printing, create new designs to the complicated but lovely ich were in vogue about a 100 Ironically, the foreign markets for those very prints and if the hoping to bounce back into the have to provide it with the

ible, scores of artisans have f in search of other, more luc- in Jaipur and other parts of Hanuman Chippa, once one of ds in Sanganer, last year quit his family line of block printing and ll savings started a small shop, s and tubes in Jaipur. Says a ippa: "It hurts me to sit in the es. But I cannot go back to block is a dying art. After all we must to live." But, the few who are to their traditional art are doing cessity. One of them maintains printing is his religion and sometimes feels tempted to give it up for a business that would pay better, he resists as "it is a question of prestige".

Sanganer would have been the industrious village that it was once had it not been for the over-zealousness of officials from the Rajasthan Small Scale Industries Corporation (RSSIC). In the hope of popularising Sanganer, they began hard selling it to foreign buyers and securing orders which the artisans could not cope with. RSSIC's former managing director Munnilal Goyal, however, did not envisage that this would have disastrous consequences on the flourishing art.

RAMESH MENON

Chippa outside the tyre shop: opting out

Boosting the foreign market, they ignored the indigenous market completely, unaware that if the earlier failed, the artisans could have fallen back on the home market. Now Goyal, who is presently the director of industries sees Sanganer as a bad dream attributing the disaster to the callousness of the RSSIC. He feels that they failed to sustain the boom by not holding more exhibitions abroad to secure orders. The RSSIC also did precious little to discourage the artisans from taking to screen printing as it was then producing immediate dividends.

The Dhoond Nadi, a stream which flows past Sanganer, has seen the artisans wash and dry their cloth on its banks for nearly two centuries. Now it quietly flows past, a grim reminder of a tradition which once was.

—RAMESH MENON in Jaipur

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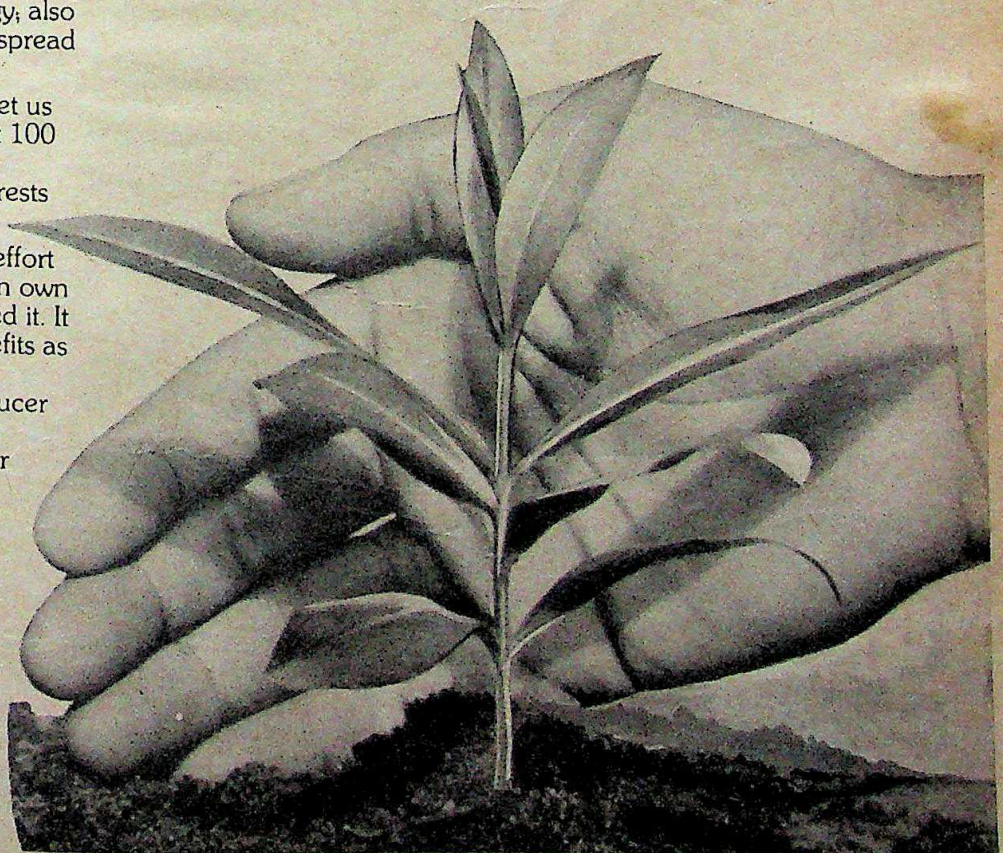

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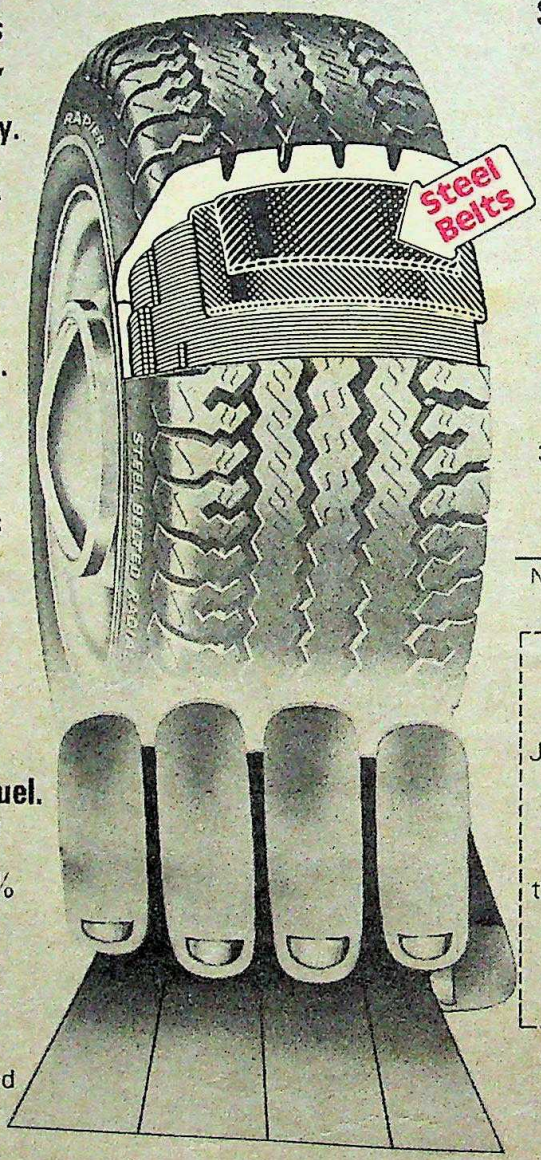

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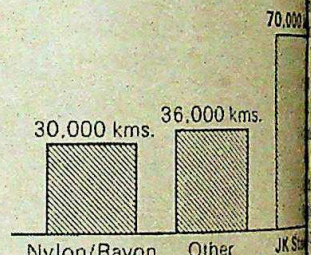

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aling The Scenes

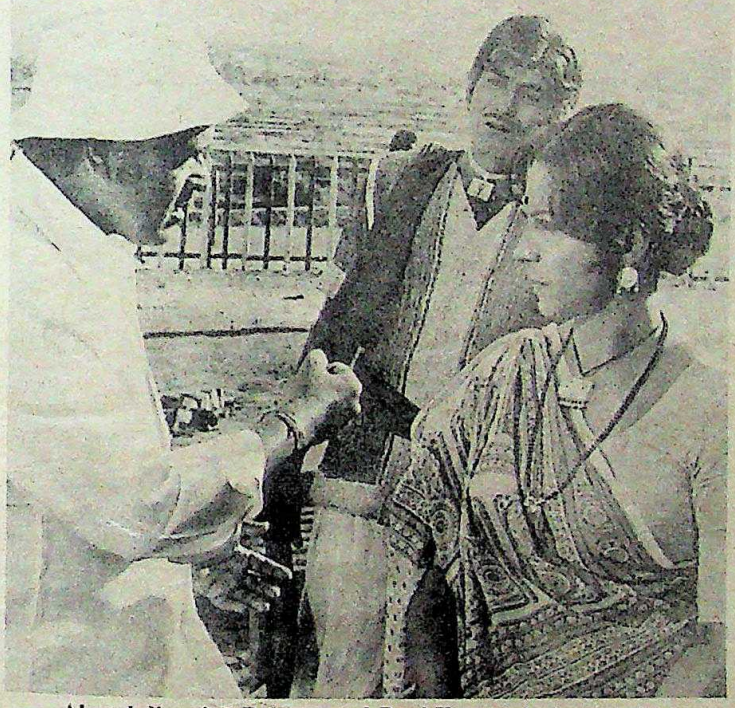
KANTA
director: Sultan Ahmed
Raaj Kumar, Rajesh Khanna,
Amjad Khan, Waheeda Rehman,
and Sulakshana Pandit

LATE showbiz great, John more, often recounted an inci- from the time he worked in a ory company which had such a pire that there was invariably play time. Forgetting his lines rymore sidled over to the wings at the director: "What's the me the befuddled at's the play?"

ing his multi-star- *Kanta*, Sultan st have faced a simi- on more occasions The film has so many ted from successful hmed, like his audi- surely have had guring out just he was working on time. A tenuous half a dozen over- es, complete with rowed from easily movies, like *Sholay*, *Baarat*, *Pakeezah*, a number of devo- *Dharam Kanta* is a e of virtually every tried on the Hindi

rvent miracle-mak- tional cinema hotly with mind-suspend- bilities from the ood school of film- ally strong are the filmdom's clichéd revenge ghby digressions into female *Pakeezah*-style, the reformist of crooks turning into do- traces of the talented roadside which has already been done countless Mumtaz and Hema With the dubious skill of a ney tailor, Ahmed has patched ions from a selected mixture of ers of the last decade. with its opening shot, which is from outdated Hollywood *Hur*, *Dharam Kanta* is about -de-moustache on a dacoit. as Bhawani Singh is a dacoit— *Sholay*-style ruins to operate specialises in looting newly-weds and wedding parties. But it is when he switches to kidnapping that divine retribution strikes. The son of Thakur Harnam Singh dies while in Bhawani's captivity, and in her grieved state the Thakur's wife places a mighty curse on Bhawani. The gods promptly oblige by sending a massive deluge in which Bhawani's wife (Waheeda Rehman), his two young sons and daughter are swept away.

Predictably, the mother reappears in a hovel in some indeterminate city, and the sons, each with a new-found guardian, blossom into Shiv (Jeetendra) and Shankar (Rajesh Khanna). But the twists in Sultan Ahmed's multi-crore extravaganza have only just begun. Bhawani's daughter, again as part of the divine plan which scattered the family, is found and brought up by the Thakur and his wife, who started the whole lost-and-found ball rolling.



Ahmed directing Rehman and Raaj Kumar: tortuous twists

Ahmed has even further refinements in store. Seeing the error of his sinful ways once he has lost his family, Bhawani decides to go straight. Sidekick Chandan Singh (Amjad Khan) opposes him, tries to bump him off, and is finally bumped off himself. This adds revenge to the confused welter of cross-currents already running through the film. Chandan's son, Jwala, (once again played by Amjad Khan) swears to avenge his father's death.

The scene shifts to the jail where, by a series of coincidences, Bhawani, Shiv and Shankar (whose respective adopted guardians have trained them for a life of crime) and Jwala all meet. But the lost are not found yet, since Bhawani and his sons do not know that they are related. A series of encounters, both within and outside the jail, take place between the four, with Jwala intent on trapping Bhawani and evening the score. Meanwhile, the friendship between Shiv and Shankar slowly blossoms; Shiv's *Pakeezah*-like girl-friend is almost raped; Bhawani and his wife get together after his release from jail; and an assortment of other romantic and comic thrills are thrown in to increase the hotch-potch.

It is only when Jwala kidnaps and tries to rape the Thakur's daughter (who is actually Bhawani's own daughter) that the film finally moves towards its resolution. Bhawani saves the girl from a fate worse than death, and in gratitude, the Thakur's wife rescinds her curse on him. Once more, divine sanction is invoked, and this time it results in Bhawani being reunited with his family. The film reaches its inevitable climax, in which the dacoits and their leader are exterminated, the families come together once more, and the two sons hand themselves over to the police to atone for their criminal careers. Finally, all's well that ends well.

Dharam Kanta suffers not so much from its basic story-line as from the director's total inability to explain it. No single part of the film's multi-pronged theme is developed fully, and the audience is clearly expected (not unreasonably, considering the film's initial success) to accept every new twist as pre-ordained. Locales are ill-defined and confusing, with the camera switching from sand dunes to the Chambal ravines to a lush riverbed to the seaside, while the story remains in the same general area. The staccato progression of *Dharam Kanta*, in fact, suggests that Ahmed developed the story as he went along, adding a scene here and a new theme there. Judging by the unashamed plagiarism from such a variety of sources, this is in all probability what did happen. In fact, if placed in a time capsule, *Dharam Kanta* could effortlessly provide future generations with adequate information on the gamut of Indian film-making in the '70s: it is a hotch-potch of borrowed themes.

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

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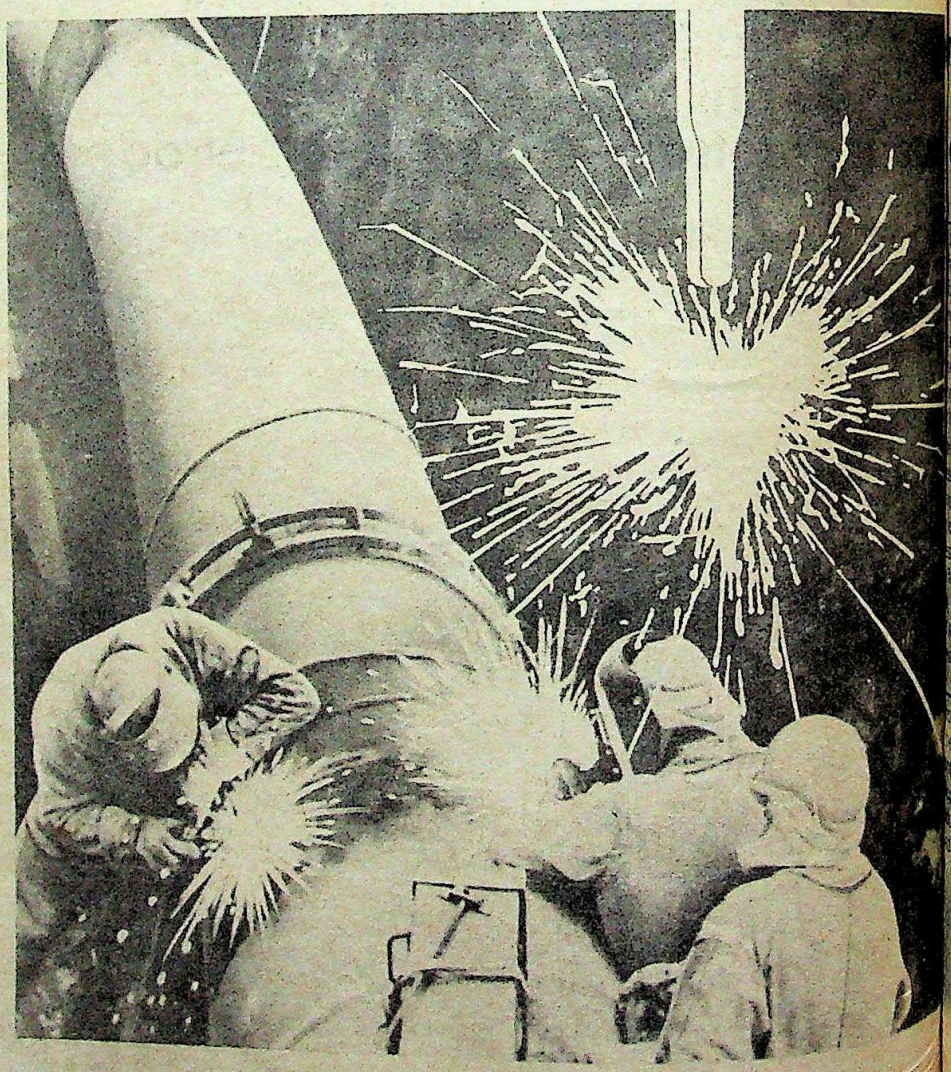
The silver lining, to the cloud undergrou



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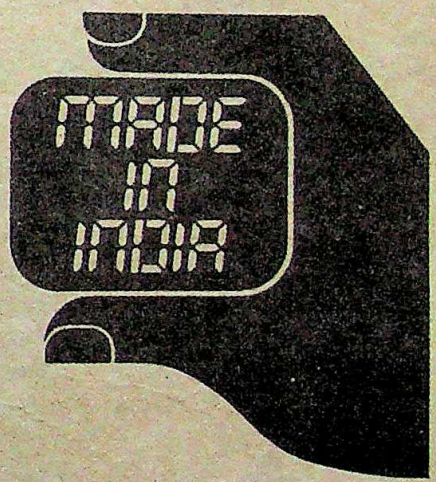

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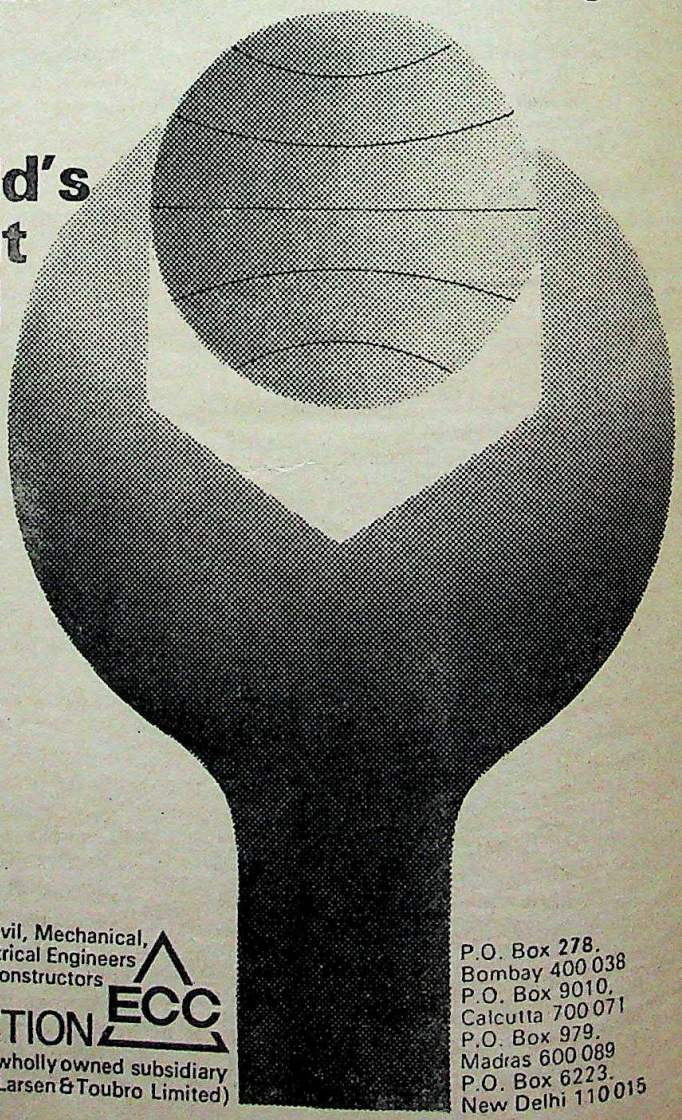

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A FULL recognition of what Indian handicrafts is all about—its economic setting, its problems and potential, needs a deep and detailed analysis of the priorities, commitments and manifest actions of those involved in its . D.N. Saraf's experience in the sulted in a glossy, beautifully k which ought to have begun

g itself as a souped up PR job Indian Handicrafts Board on ass served as development com- major section of the book is extensive and fairly exhaustive Indian craft skills. Crafts of e presented through a com- a word of history, a snippet on an image of the cultural milieu statistics in flat bureaucratese bout 150 artisans are actively this craft and the annual pro- timated at about Rs 5 lakh." kingly compiles existing official ng with Andhra Pradesh's du- zri, bidri, leather puppets and an balhapa embroidery, going y through Bihar's sikki grass, pplique, Kashmir's carpets, adesh's textiles to populous sh, whose 20 lakh artisans pro- per cent of the total value of the country.

Information: At times mation is somewhat unrealistic. a section on Uttar Pradesh: "A opment centre at Khurja pro- facilities to about 200 units in supplying processed raw ma- industry. There is also a design centre that provides the in- new designs and items. In Chin- half-a-dozen units produce goods kh. The Uttar Pradesh Small poration has set up a com- at Chinhat which supplies pro- terial and clay to other small making pottery articles." This mation in a government hand- division commentary but in reality the Government units are almost defunct and manufacturers are struggling pitifully with no coal to fire their kilns. Azamgarh and Gorakhpur potters and artisans do not find mention (although a terracotta Durga is shown in a photograph) nor does the fact that they face great difficulty in getting their raw material. It is this kind of problem that hits most artisans in rural areas, whether it is lack of credit facility, raw material, water, electricity, design adaptation or a suitable ongoing market.

Saraf is not unaware of this and touches on them sincerely and emotionally in his introduction and in the chapters on craftsmen, research, design and marketing. On handlooms he says: "The craft faces several problems such as shortages of raw material, especially yarn, the slow process of modernizing looms and other equipment to reduce labour but facilitate skill, the difficulty of adapting traditional designs for modern requirements, and basic problems of finance and marketing." However, when he goes on to state glibly that "with the progressive solution to these problems, the future for handloom textiles appears most promising", it has the familiar mesmerising tone of an official speech at Vigyan Bhavan.

The quality of crafts shown in the illustrated section could hardly have been selected as typifying excellence. The brass plate from Moradabad on page 201 is exquisite; the Kerala grass mat on page 107 mediocre and the detailed example of Gujarat's tie and dye craft on page 55 is crude and uncharacteristic, particularly when the Kutch region's finest *bandhani* sari has designs made up of over 2 lakh tiny dots. The quality of the photographs themselves destroys the verve and vitality of crafts that Saraf lovingly describes. A few good colour plates would have brought life to this section and done the job left undone by a large number of uninspiring black and white reproductions of standard fare.

Readers, both foreign and Indian, who are interested in crafts, will find the book a handy guide to what comes from where—a ready reckoner for handicrafts for tourists and traders akin to Kothari's guide to industrial products if they are willing to part with such a large sum for so limited a gain. Saraf hopes the book will stimulate the curiosity of those who know a good thing when they see it. For those who want a trade journal or craft information digest, yes, but as an enlightened book on craft potential and development, its cover belies its content.

—JAYA JAITLEY

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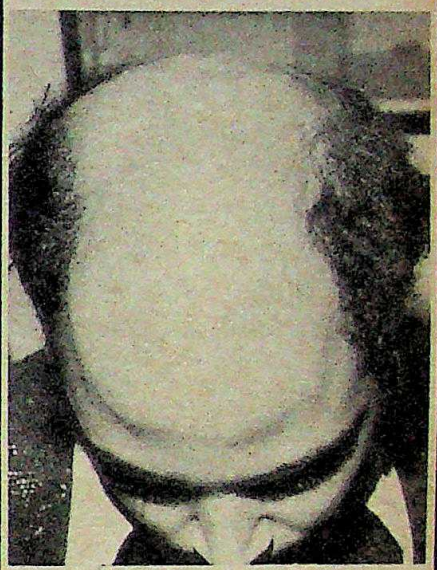

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Nargis (fourth from left) with Reagan besides her at the football match: digging out the past

■ One Indian personality who seems to have a thing about American presidents is film star **Sunil Dutt**. Dutt, however, has much more in common with the present incumbent, himself a former actor, than he did with Jimmy Carter. He was one of the guests at President **Ronald Reagan**'s dinner hosted for Mrs Gandhi during the Indian prime minister's Washington visit last month and he handed Reagan a bit of memorabilia which proved that their connections went back to 1952. It was in the form of a photograph showing Reagan watching a football match with Dutt's late wife, **Nargis**. "When I gave them (the Reagans) the picture and they learnt that Nargis had died, they kept talking about it for five minutes," says Dutt.

The talk centred around the occasion, which Reagan had forgotten. In 1952, a high-powered Indian film delegation, which included Nargis, visited the US. In Hollywood, the American Motion Picture Association hosted a football match in honour of the delegation and Nargis was escorted by Reagan, then president of the association.

■ It is probably the most famous foot in the country and at the moment it resembles a huge advertising blimp for Bata shoes. The foot belongs to cricket superstar **Sunil Gavaskar** and is encased in a giant-sized orthopaedic shoe to prevent the ankle from twisting. Gavaskar fractured the ankle when England all-rounder **Ian Botham** took a mighty heave at the ball which caught Gavaskar a full-blooded blow on his rear ankle at his short-leg positon.

Next week, Gavaskar will remove the shoe and start training for the upcoming series against Sri Lanka. "Yes of course I'm confident I'll be able to play. The fracture is completely healed now," he says, putting at rest any fears that the run machine would be out of order for the series.

■ The family that works together stays together. Actor-patriot **Manoj Kumar** has taken this maxim to heart. Last fortnight, he launched sons **Vishal** and **Kunaal** into the film industry and created a record: every member of his family has something to do with cinema. Manoj Kumar produces, directs and acts in his own films. Wife **Shashi** writes the scripts. In the film *Ricky* Manoj has penned the lyrics. Vishal will

Kunaal and Vishal: star debuts

sing them, and Kunaal will mouth them on screen. Brother **Rajiv Goswami** is cast in Manoj's next production *Painter Babu*. Says Manoj of his sons' debut: "God has put the ball in their court, now it's up to them to either smash it or just let it go by." Tennis, anyone?

■ The Venkatappa Art Gallery is usually the meeting place of Bangalore's culture vultures. But last fortnight the gallery was the unlikely hangout of the city's young bloods who had thronged there to goggle, leer and whistle at the first one-woman show held there. The uproar had been caused by the nudes painted by **Savithri Raman**, 24, a bank clerk. The

Raman with se... Letting her hair...

reason for the co... not end there: Ram... painted anonymou... the buff, but herse... started painting, w... the model, early l... she locked hers... room, bared her bo... of the mirror and le... lead her. Reactions r... the consternation of ... to the shocked d... then grudging admir... viewers. Says Raman... to start my own s... paint male nudes."

SIGN POS...

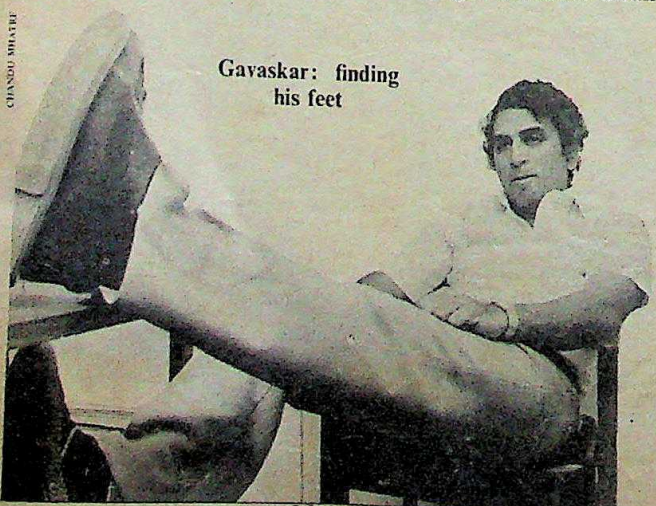
■ **Died:** Eknath R... founder president of ... kananda Rock Mem... the Vivekananda ... Kanyakumari, follo... diac arrest in ...

■ **Married:** Play... Bhupinder to Mith... jee, a non-film singe... der has so far sung ... songs, mostly for ...

■ **Appointed:** D... as director of the ... Archives of India ... associated with the ... Archives for the ...

CHANDU MHATRE

Gavaskar: finding his feet



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TODAY

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THE CABINET RESHUFFLE

What has she achieved?

ALSO

SHEIKH ABDULLAH'S LAST JOURNEY

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THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

ONE OF the more exciting facets of the [illegible] *journalism to have hit the Indian scene in recent years is investigative reporting which has injected new life in the profession. Startling or behind the scenes disclosures in the media before then were usually in the nature of leaks from interested parties or officials, or at most revelations made by disgruntled or aggrieved sources. Rare was the persevering reporter who dug out facts and painstakingly put together a news story which blew the lid off a scandal or news developments kept hidden from the public gaze.*

At INDIA TODAY, *investigative reports are highly prized, and correspondents have put them together in increasing numbers. The magazine exposed the death of innocent villagers in the guise of anti-dacoit "encounters" in Uttar Pradesh. It broke the story of mail censorship in Delhi and investigated the crippling of villagers in Madhya Pradesh by kesari dal—to name a few recent examples. Dogged leg-work and piecing together facts over weeks has resulted in the exposure of people being bludgeoned to death in some of the country's jails. Following up a lead provided in the answer to a parliamentary question, Correspondent* PRABHU CHAWLA *documented the death of 31 undertrials in Delhi's Tihar Jail (*INDIA TODAY, *June 15). In this issue, Chawla follows up with the result of a similar investigation in Tamil Nadu which even the Government admits has the country's worst record.*

The task of getting incontrovertible facts, difficult enough at the best of times, was made all the harder by the atmosphere of fear that pervades the bureaucracy in Tamil Nadu, where the infamous Press Bill has been used against journalists. Trying to gather information, Chawla ran into stiff opposition more than once. A typical response to any request for information would be a curt, "Don't you know we are not allowed to talk to the press?" Said Chawla: "Fortunately, there are enough sensible people who are keen to right a wrong in even the most repressive atmosphere."

JOURNALISM like every profession, has its more poignant moments: INDIA TODAY*'s recent coverage of the political developments in Kashmir is a case in point. The last issue featured Sheikh Abdullah and his son Farooq on the cover to mark a decisive turn in the state's politics with the induction of Farooq into the Sheikh's cabinet, a barely disguised move to nominate a successor. The issue turned out to be unhappily prophetic with the Sheikh's death last fortnight. Flying to Srinagar for the second time in two weeks, Managing Editor* SUMAN DUBEY *met with numerous requests of the last issue from people keen to acquire a colour picture of their departed leader. In a brief condolence meeting, Farooq told Dubey that the pictures taken by Photographer* BHAWAN SINGH *happened to be the last taken of the Sheikh when he was alive.*

If that is so, then the very last picture of the Sheikh is the one on page 20, snapped when father and son were walking indoors at the end of a brief picture session with Dubey and Singh. Said Dubey, on his return from the Sheikh's funeral, "Reporters are not expected to feel any personal involvement in stories they do, but it is impossible to remain unmoved at the funeral of a man who just two weeks ago was sitting with you on a lawn."

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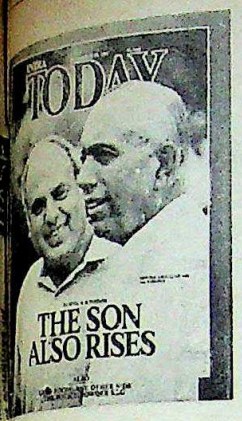

FOR ALL PEOPLE

cover story," The Son Also Rises" ber 15) gave a very competent por- of Sheikh Abdullah. The Sheikh was who could adjust himself to all people. like the man in a story who when he butcher talked of meat, when he met a talked of bread and when he met them talked of sandwiches.

R.K. Gulati

interview with Dr Farooq proved beyond doubt that the sky mit for Hypocrisy in Indian politics.

N.L. Chawla

NG A STONE

glad to see that people of the d castes are at last taking their s to court ("Caste Abuse" er 15). Isn't it ironical that people rely discriminate against their fel- rymen are also the ones who loudly racial discrimination against their brethren?

Prabhakar Avare

BY THE SWORD

savage lathi charge on a peaceful ration by journalists ("Rule of the ptember 15) should be condemned e. It is not surprising that the overnment should deal ruthlessly alists. But the time has come for to stand with the journalist—his ves us all.

Mridula Mukherjee

PERA

Soapy Scrap" (September 15) at corporate giants in increasing heads and therefore their prices ght of the purchasing power of er. There is just so much that one superior packaging and quality Surf went beyond that limit.

Rajesh Chaturvedi

Our country continues to produce entrepreneurs of the calibre of Karsanbhai Patel is a source of immense satisfaction. The multinationals had better watch out!

Varanasi *Shiv Shankar Kabra*

ICE BREAKER

Mrs Gandhi's visit to the US ("Breaking The Ice", August 31) has proved that the oft-talked of differences between this country and America are not serious. Most of the problems have been deliberately blown up. This cover story gave a vivid picture of the genuine efforts being made by both countries for a closer understanding.

New Delhi *M.P. Mittal*

■ How can Mrs Gandhi say to overseas Indians: "We have nothing to be ashamed of"? We have rampant corruption in this country, a total erosion of morals and principles in government, nepotism, a near-total breakdown of law and order, a criminal police force that gets away with blindings and fake encounters—can we be proud of these?

Bangalore *Nana Menon*

■ It truly was a triumphant tour—Mrs Gandhi out-Reaganed President Reagan in populism.

New Delhi *R.K. Kapoor*

■ The two pictures—one of Mrs Gandhi with Richard M. Nixon and another of her with Ronald Reagan—captured the difference in the relationship of our two countries now and a decade ago.

New Delhi *Dr C.M. Maker*

■ By her actions over the years Mrs Gandhi has demonstrated that she is thick-skinned. But at the U Thant Award ceremony she acknowledged it to the world when she said that she does not recognise herself in the articles written criticising her. Talk about water off a duck's back!

Bombay *R.Jayaram*

■ It is too easy to read in visits like this a greater significance than there is. Actually, shorn of the verbiage, stripped of the cosmetics and discounting the glib phrases, there is little to distinguish this visit from any other.

Paramakudi *G. Parthasarathy*

■ The report was not only informative but also objective. It becomes clear that India needs US support more than ever and this is not just in the matter of economic aid—the Government has woken up to the challenge that the USSR presents to the entire subcontinent by its presence in Afghanistan. And American investment in this country will go a long way in bolstering our economy.

Calcutta *K.Susrita*

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GAGGING THE PRESS

"Mishra's Fig Leaf" (August 31) was excellent. It is reports like this brutally honest one that the Government in Bihar wants to arm itself against. And this bill has been introduced by a man who describes himself as one with "little intelligence" – imagine the damage that could be done by a very intelligent man.

Gulbarga *S.E. Asuti*

■ It is hardly surprising that the Press Bill has been introduced in Bihar. Jagannath Mishra needs all the help he can get in covering the tracks of his corrupt regime.

Sahibganj *Biseswar Pandey*

■ The article was the high point of this issue. It's heartening to know that there are journalists who are willing to risk the wrath of the present Government.

Parbhani *A.S Ratnam*

■ The article made clear that this bill was introduced after the Centre cleared it. It fits into the pattern being set in the rest of the country where no Congress(I) chief minister would dare take even a minor step without prior permission of New Delhi.

Jaipur *Sanjay Dixit*

■ It was plain after reading this article that Jagannath Mishra lacks objectivity, vision, impartiality and strength of character. The only quality that came through was his propensity for telling lies.

Bombay *A.L.Khera*

■ Arun Shourie is right. If this trend is to be fought every journalist must take up the battle and concentrate on Bihar's callous and corrupt government.

Mathura *Brijesh Kumar*

■ Mishra probably got the idea of gagging the press after Shourie and other journalists hounded A.R. Antulay out of office. This man may have "little intelligence" but at least this time he learnt his lessons fast.

Patna *Dr Sunil Shroff*

■ Considering the importance of this bill to the entire country—every section of society, not just journalists—the article should have been the cover story. If the media itself misjudges the significance of this bill, what hope is there for fighting it?

Hamirpur *Rajendra Rajan*

BACHCHAN'S BATTLE

The article on Amitabh Bachchan ("A Stricken Star", August 31) shocked me deeply. I never know that actors risked such a lot when on the sets.

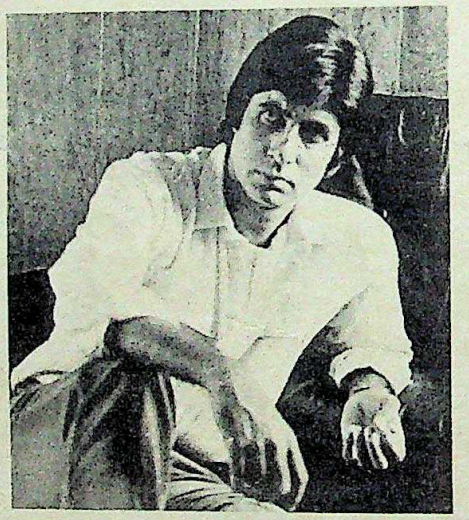
Trivandrum *R.V. Venkatraman*

■ The report was unnecessarily dramatic. No doubt the star's "heroic and lonely struggle" is very touching but the efforts of the medical team should have been mentioned more fully. Even the reactions of the fans were overplayed. How did the boy in rags, who offered Bachchan any organ he might need, get near the hospital? As for the girl of eight who fainted when she heard of the accident, it might have been more credible if the age had been doubled.

Bombay *Ramji R. Abinashi*

■ It is fitting that this magazine carried such a detailed account of Bachchan's accident. For the first time in a decade the entire nation waited with baited breath for news of one man's recovery. That in itself is a feat.

Arrah *Ayaz Parwez*



■ A university library turned into a film set? Was it Jnana Bharati or Cine Bharati University campus?

Bombay *N.C. Wagle*

■ Bangalore has doctors who are as good as any in the country. If Bachchan did not get prompt attention it was probably due to his family's insistence that doctors fly in from Bombay. The delay, rather than the medical attention did the harm.

Bangalore *S.N.R. Sastry*

■ In the box "Staying Alive" the area outlined by the dotted lines was said to be the abdominal cavity. The lines included the thoracic cavity and the cervical region.

Ahmedabad *Rajendra Balge*

■ There were quite a few errors in this report. Bronchi are not tiny air sacs, they are minute tubes. The Swan Ganz catheter never goes through the trachea, it comes roughly through the back of the shoulder.

Jaipur *Nippun Gupta*

TURNING THE TIDE

"An Eye For An Eye" (Au described in detail how politicians are using the average citizen as fodder in their political battles. This for the rest of the country as well. But will soon come when the masses against these amoral and power individuals.

Trivandrum *K R*

WELL DONE

It is unfair to discredit the ONGC Towering Inferno", August 31) sayi does not pause to look backward drilling is a dangerous job and I think ONGC has done well.

New Delhi *Sanjay M*

■ The report states that the fees by Paul 'Red' Adair are very high on to state that Adair's charge Ekofisk (in the UK's North Sea oil nearly £4 million. In an interview British *Sunday Telegraph* Red Adair "You may remember that on the E was said that we made £3.5 million our fee was under £300,000–an expenses and all. We have a stan ranging from £1,750 to £3,000 per d we are working on certain jobs."

Bombay *M M*

DIVIDE AND FALL

"Castles Of Sand" (August 31 how pathetic the Opposition is. The drawback in our democratic set-up fragmented opposition. If only our could get over their petty egoistic and band together. No wonder Mr refers to this opposition with cont

Visakhapatnam *T. S*

■ The article made clear that united nation-wide opposition BJP. But the irony is that this party come to power in even one state.

Madras *C T*

TRUE GANDHIAN

At a time when every unscru politician uses Mahatma Gandhi's suit his own purpose, it is good to people like Manibhai Desai ("A Champion", August 31) who do th that our leaders only talk about like his that is the hope of rural

Bombay

CORRECTION

The photograph of the Bo lice riots on page 17 of the Sep issue should have credited to Parpiani/*The Daily*. The regretted.

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...l Nadu: Tortured to Death
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...a Floods: Cycle of Sorrow
...er Story
...ernment: The Cabinet Carousel
...e Trotting
...: Downing Shutters
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...: The Young Master
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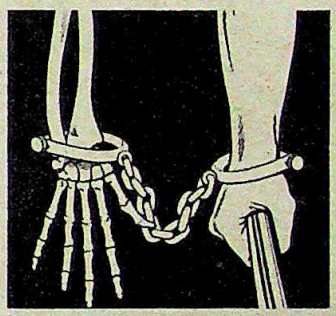
...atchers

PHOTOGRAPH BY RAGHU RAI

IN FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT

COVER STORY: Mrs Gandhi's seventh cabinet reshuffle in 30 months saw 27 new appointments and took her Cabinet to an unprecedented 61 members. For all the sound and fury, the promotions and demotions, entries and exits, few political pundits had any rational explanation for the changes, which could have been an opportunity to galvanise the Government and, half way through the Government's five-year term, provide a government that works: **Page 56**

CURRENT EVENTS: For the sheltered and picturesque valley of Kashmir, it was, last fortnight, the end of a tumultuous as well as a glorious era and the beginning of another one. The death of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the 'Lion of Kashmir' on September 9, left his people grieving but undoubtedly ready to face the future under the leadership of his son Dr Farooq Abdullah, who was unanimously hailed the next chief minister. A report on the funeral with colour pictures. **Page 20**



INVESTIGATION: Brutal crimes committed by callous custodians of the law have become the order of the day. In MGR's five-year rule, 190 undertrials lost their lives in jails under suspicious circumstances. Reports pertaining to these deaths, usually of petty criminals, coming from the police are contrary to the post-mortem reports of hospital doctors. In all cases, prior to the death, the reports state that the victims have been brutally beaten up. An in-depth report. **Page 46**

MEDIA: The nation-wide protest against the anti-press bill passed by various state governments is gathering momentum. Chief ministers of Bihar and Tamil Nadu have based their diatribe against the "yellow and scurrilous" press totally on the hundreds of mofussil newspapers that dot their states. An investigative report on mofussil journalism in Bihar and the brewing agitation amongst the media fraternity in Tamil Nadu. **Page 133**

ADVERTISING: The advertising industry in India has come of age: quadrupling in size over a decade, getting slicker in its persuasiveness, capitalising on the media explosion, the industry is now seen as essential for both marketing success and corporate growth. A stock-taking report: **Page 101**

THE ARTS: Viewed by an estimated 80,000 people, *Aditi*, one of the exhibitions at the Festival of India in London, recently ended accompanied by resounding accolades from the British press as well as the people who saw it. It was certainly successful in portraying the art, artisans and performers of rural India. But all was not well as the organisers discovered a discrepancy of some £25,000. A report on the exhibition with photographs. **Page 142**

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"EUTHERIA gives me prompt relief from muscular sprains and pains"

-Says Kapil Dev

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(Kapil Dev)

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YOUTHFUL HOPEFULS

WITH the induction into the Union Cabinet of Indian Youth Congress-I (IYC-I) President Ghulam Nabi Azad, speculation is rife on who will be its next chief. At least four names are being mentioned in this connection; they are: Sanjay Singh, minister of state for forestry, fisheries and animal husbandry in Uttar Pradesh and formerly the state's Youth Congress(I) chief; Tariq Anwar, an MP from Bihar; D.P. Roy and Vinod Sharma, both general secretaries of the IYC(I).

Roy fought the West Bengal assembly elections in May and lost, while Sharma is an MLA from Punjab. Sanjay Singh's chances are considered bright, because as the late Sanjay Gandhi's confidant he personally knows most Youth Congress workers all over the country. Besides, he knows a lot about Maneka Gandhi, who is forming a rival political party next month. Singh's knowledge will certainly come in handy to tackle Maneka and also to prevent any possible exodus from the Youth Congress(I) ranks to her party. Unless, of course, Mrs Gandhi wishes to have a Muslim, in which case Anwar stands a good chance.

...UM FROM CHINA?

...E CHINESE may be ready to fill the breach for India in the ...pply of the much needed enriched uranium for the Tarapur ...lant. After Subramaniam Swamy's recent statement that he ...e willing to take up India's case with China for possible ...of the fuel, Chinese diplomats in New Delhi say that China ...willing to consider India's request if India approaches them. ...ve, however, been quick to add that their uranium is only ...r peaceful domestic purposes. If the Indians and the Chinese ...ing on a possible deal, it will give new impetus to *'Hindi-...i bhai'*.

...TING IN PUNJAB

...MER Union minister Swaran Singh has been sounded to ...iate between agitating Akalis and Mrs Gandhi. A kind of ...ate has arisen, since the Akalis insist that their demands ...g autonomy for Punjab should be accepted first, and only ...ks are possible. Former Punjab minister and Akali leader ...Singh had a series of meetings in Delhi with several leaders, ...g Rajiv Gandhi.

...ng the persons considered for the role of mediator was ...n Singh Surjeet; but it was finally agreed that Swaran Singh ...d man for the job. He had his early grounding in the Akali ...commands respect among its major faction leaders. The ...vernment has been asked to keep P.S. Badal, the former ...f minister and G.S. Tohra, chief of the SGPC (Shiromani ...ra Prabandhak Committee), in separate jails so that each ...et separately. Tohra is lodged in the Ferozepur jail while ...ooling his heels in Ludhiana.

...LINE CASE

...DDEN flurry of aggressive activity across the border, ...rticularly in the J & K area, has put the Defence Ministry in ...dap. Since August 23, military border post commanders ...orted no less than six cases where Pakistan troops have ...en in the Poonch area alone. In the last unprovoked burst of ...e Indian jawan was seriously injured. Defence Ministry ...ys that the activity is unprecedented and could signal the ...mething, though they are not quite sure what. In any event, ...g the border were put on alert last fortnight, just in case ...n firing is something more than an attempt to test the ...the personnel manning our border posts.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

ANDHRA Pradesh Chief Minister Bhavanam Venkatram appears to be on his way out. His announcement last week about a Rs 50-crore midday meal scheme for schoolchildren, to upstage Telugu Desam leader N.T. Rama Rao—who has said he would introduce such a scheme if voted to power in the assembly elections, due next February/March—was made against the Centre's wishes. The Centre fears there may be demands for similar schemes from other states. Last week over a dozen state leaders,

NTR addressing a rally and (inset) Janardan Reddy: leading roles

including two former chief ministers and several ministers, were summoned to the capital to help find an acceptable successor to Venkatram. Opinion seems to be veering around to state Revenue Minister N. Janardan Reddy, 48, who has been aspiring for the job since Channa Reddy was dropped in December 1980. Almost all the Andhra Pradesh leaders Mrs Gandhi spoke to favoured Reddy, except former chief minister T. Anjiah, who pleaded that he be given another chance, much to the amusement of the lady.

Meanwhile, NTR continues to draw unprecedented crowds throughout the state. This has apparently gone to his head and is upsetting many of his followers, including former Congress(I) leader Nadendla Bhaskara Rao. The actor has already declared that he will become chief minister if his party wins the poll. What is not clear, however, is whether the people who are flocking to his meetings in their hundreds of thousands will vote for him. Telugu Desam is a one-man party without any district-level organisation to convert his cinematic charisma into votes. He has reportedly decided to contest from Tirupati, the seat of India's richest and most popular god, Lord Venkateswara, who is worshipped throughout the state.

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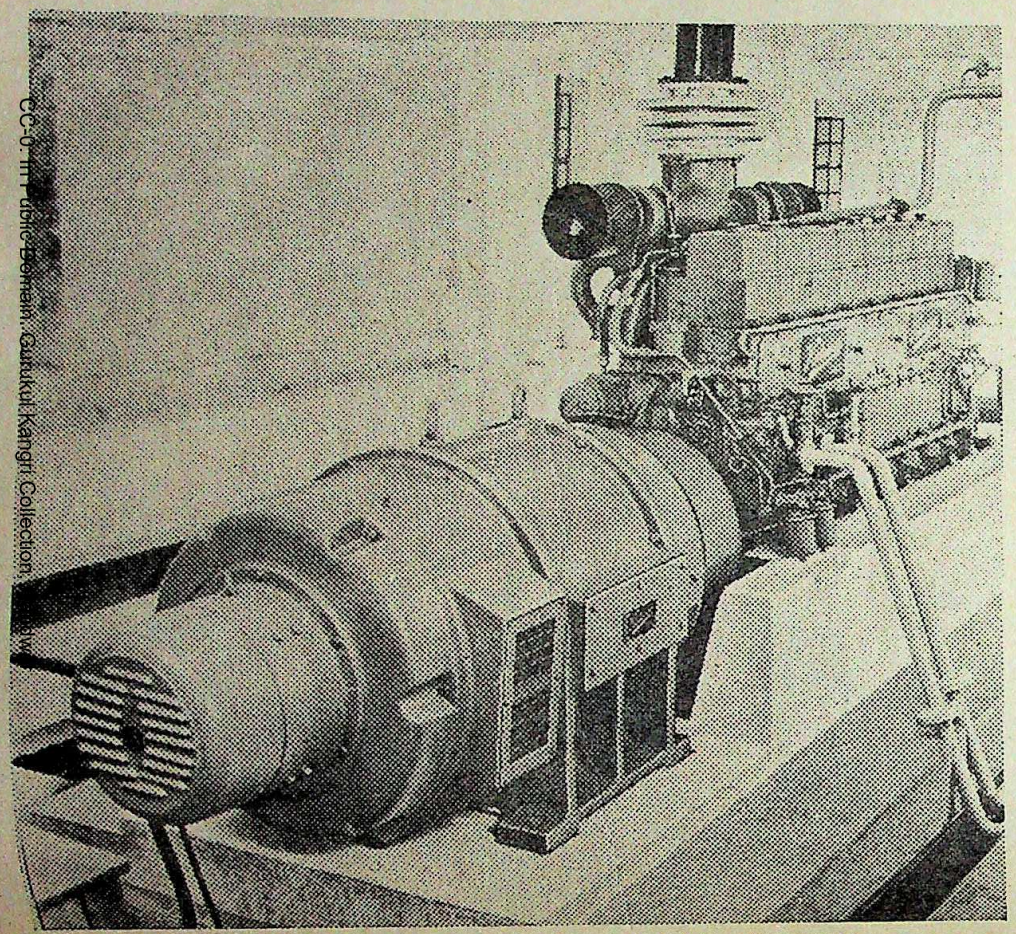

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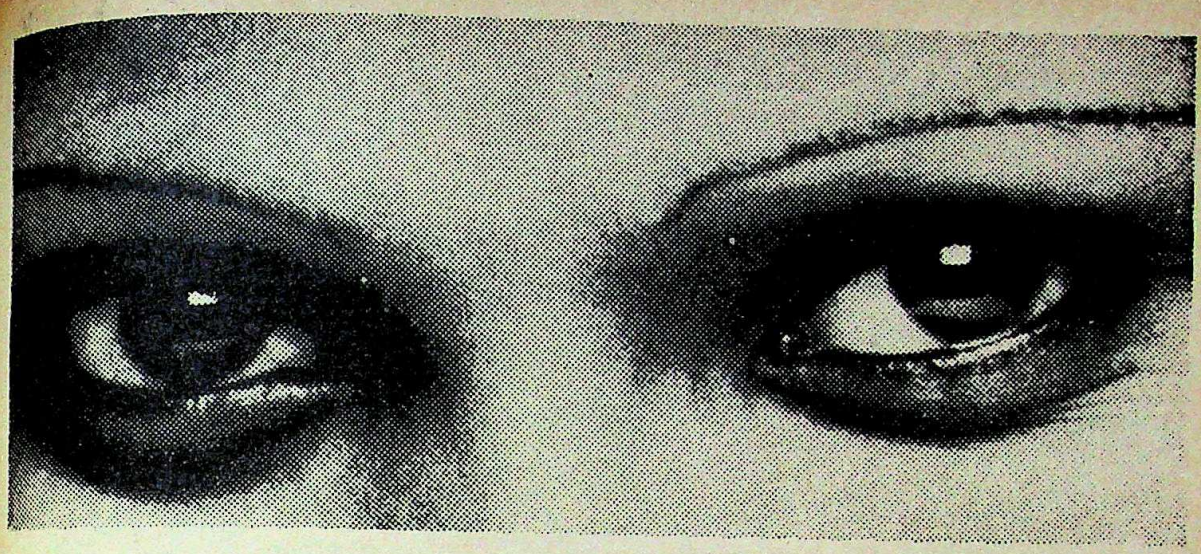

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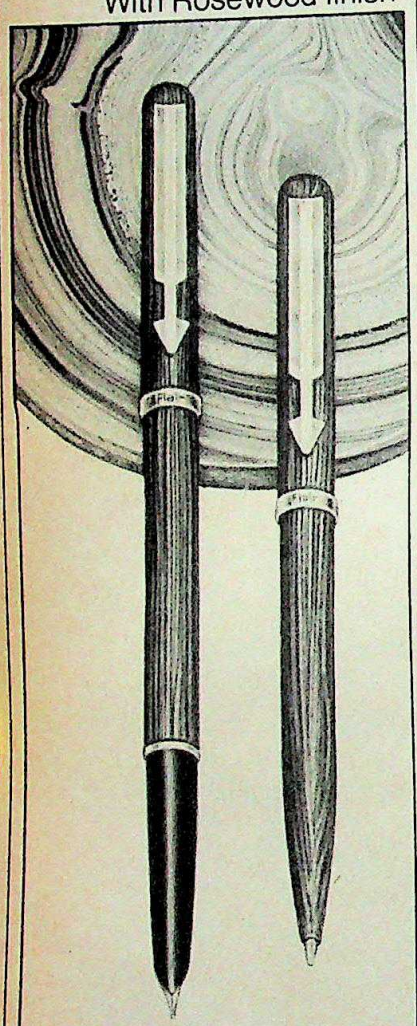

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NUCLEUS/WPC/24

» Our Parliament generates a great deal of heat but never any light.
—*P.N. Haksar in* Sta

» That fellow (Zail Singh) is an unmitigated ass.
—*Ram Jethmalani in* Gentle

» If the strategy on Antulay has been "wait and watch" it has been pr
short-sighted. —*Salman Khurshid in* Pr

» Dr Jagannath Mishra treated the Bihar Press as his fiefdom.
—*S. Sahay, chairman of the Editors' Guild of India in a re*
to the Guild Exec

» Morals, ethics and values of public life and property are finally being
on the precincts of Parliament. —*Piloo Mody in* Onlook

» Mrs Gandhi does strut and fret on the Indian political stage but her
ture is by no means imminent...(she).may actually change for the worse.
—*K.R. Sunder Rajan in* Deb

» There is a vicious new ethic around in the land and it says: Thou shalt crucify thy neighbour for the fast buck.
—*Frank Simoes in* Bombay

» I have also faced lathi-charges, what is so special about you?
—*Mrs Gandhi to newsmen in Lucknow*

» In my house, that is One Akbar Road, where I meet visitors, we have put up signs in English and Hindi in the lavatory saying "Please use the flush" but nobody does. This is the "Em
of India" talking. Just think, "the world's most powerful ruler" can't ma
subjects pull the chain! —*Abu Abraham in* The Sunday Ob

» Theirs (the Asians in East Africa) is an isolated world of colonial ma
armed guards and Alsatians.
—*Shyamal Sarkar in* The Stat

» *The Times* (London) gave a nasty review to Yamini (Krishnamurti). It w
a Dhanna Singh of some Punjabi daily proclaiming that Laurence Olivier's E
speech is defective!
—*Balwant Gargi in* The Illustrated Weekly of

» She (Mrs Gandhi) has reduced herself to the level of anti-communis
of the lowest type.
—*E.M.S. Namboodiripad in* Weekend R

» Ever since Rajneesh, Bombay's more sought-after Duplex bashes ma
Santa Monica sex farms look like blotting paper.
—*Kersy Katrak in* Ge

» I have never thought much about her (Rati Agnihotri) as an actress
sort of roles she deserves are the dancing-singing ones!
—*Kamalahasan in* Star

» When the Press interferes with that (the personal lives of people)
needs to be done about it...it needs to be bridled.
—*Babasaheb Bhosale in*

» If it is peace that we seek with neighbours, then the place where
sought is in the neighbourhood and not in the American capital.
—*A.B. Vajpayee commenting on Mrs Gandhi's recent visit to the US, in*

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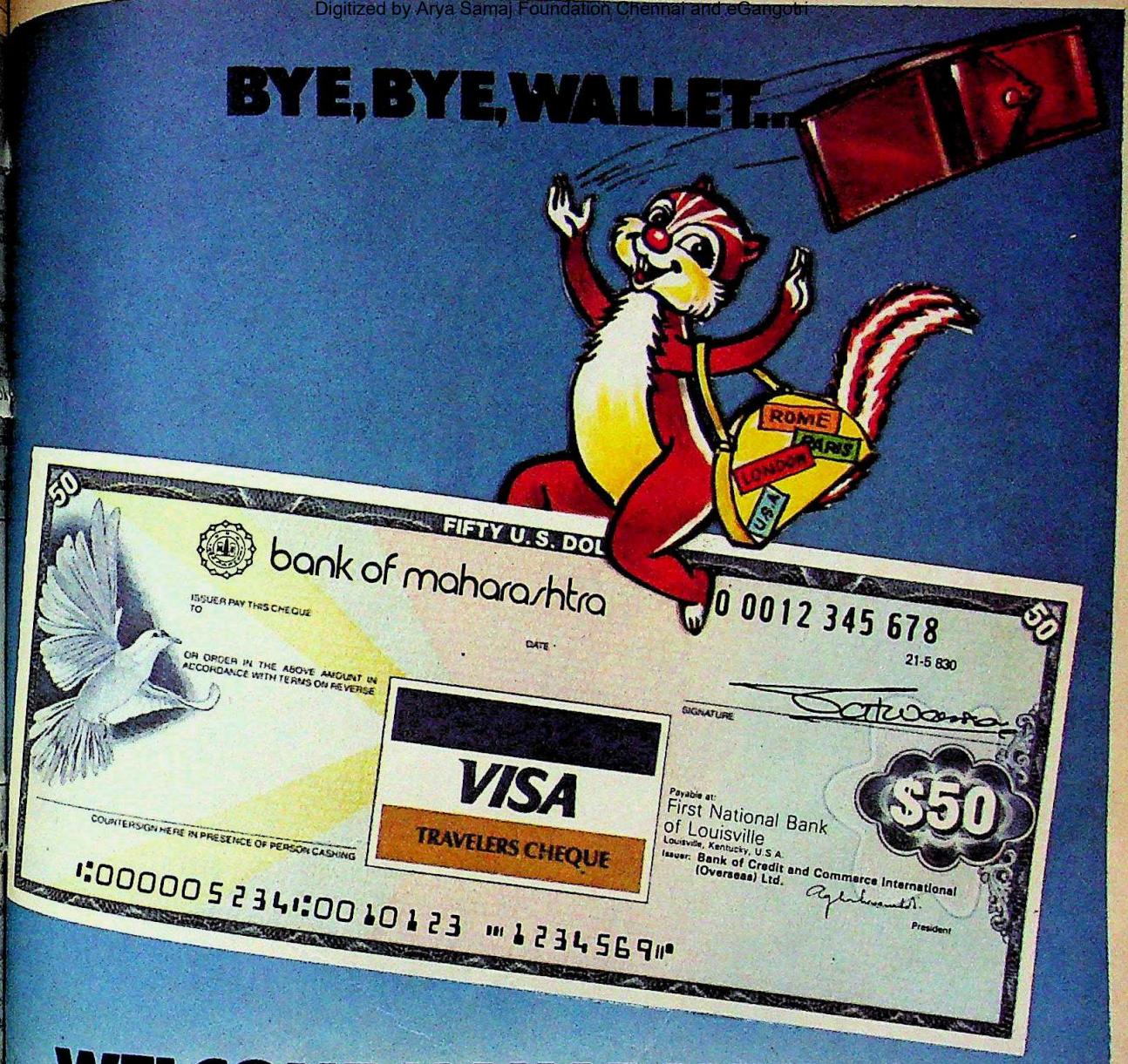
BYE, BYE, WALLET...



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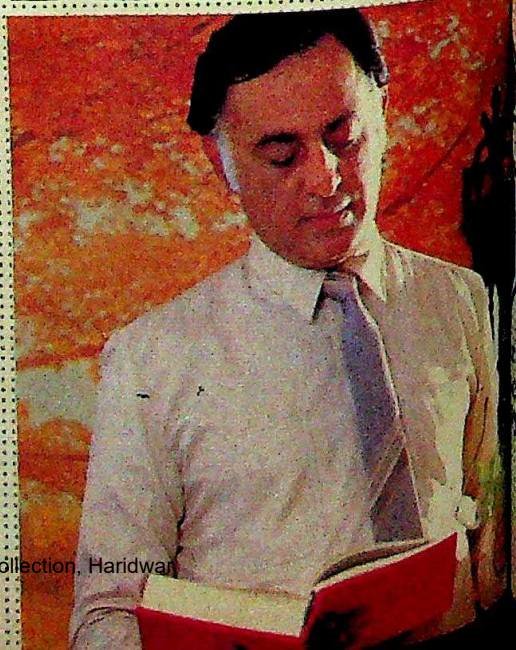
VIMAL



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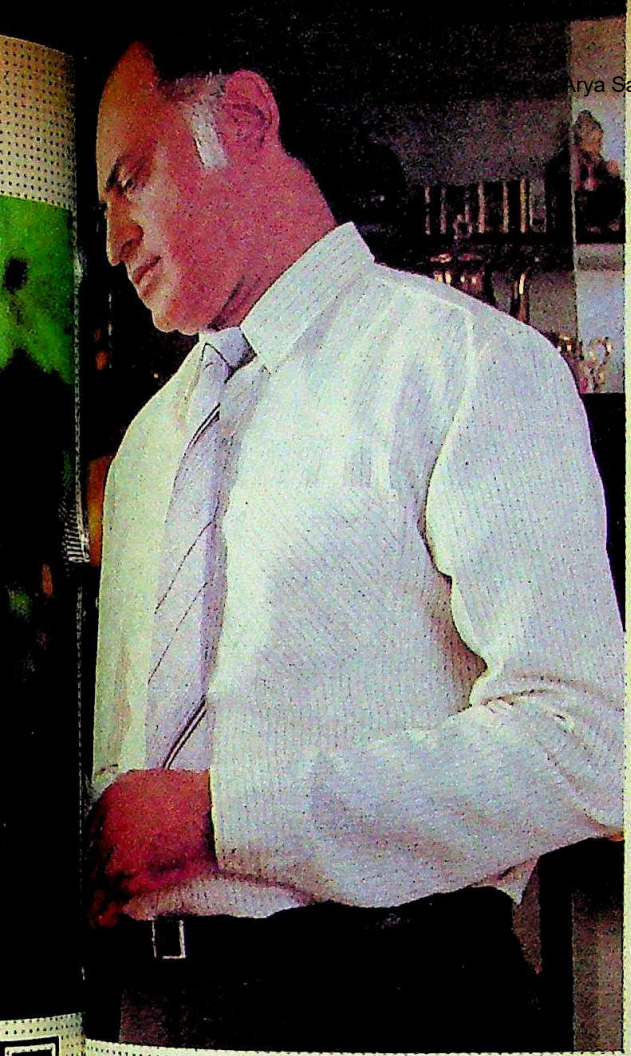

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AMP FOUNDATION

Foundation stones are a
e a dozen in this count-
—almost one for every po-
ician. So it was well in
ping with tradition when
charan Singh Ajnala,
jab education minister,
ed up in village Macchi-
a, a prosperous little co-
unity on the banks of the
in the state's most pro-
ous district, Ludhiana.
He was to do the ho-
s for a school—or ra-
he was to do the ho-
rs for the foundation
e of a school—and the

day started with the perennial garlanding, progressed to the 'speechifying', was climaxed by the laying, and proceeded smoothly through to the eating and the drinking.

But crisp *jalebis* and hot tea stuck in the villagers' throats when Ajnala failed to announce the obligatory grant from his discretionary fund for the school. Obviously, as the village was a good distance away from his constituency in Amritsar district, it would be an unprofitable investment. After eating the *jalebis*, Ajnala left for Chandigarh in a swirl of dust.

Before the dust had properly settled, a group of villagers flung themselves on the stone, ripped it out of the earth and, all heaving together, flung it into a pond. Another group gave a choric accompaniment of abuses in the earthiest Punjabi. Now they are waiting for Ajnala.

INKING DELIVERY

The angry young men
Manipur don't use only
s and bombs to express
ir displeasure vis-a-vis
ir rulers. This became evi-
t last month when three
thful Manipuri Magi ar-
d bearing a gift for state
gation Minister Chaoba
gh. The gift was conceal-
in a beautifully decorated
: the guards at the gate
.

fingered their rifles nervously and let the youths through only after much pleading.

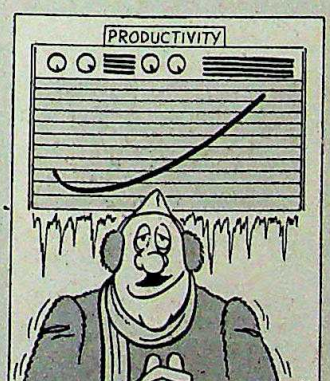
Inside the house they met the minister's wife. They told her that the box contained mangoes and apples which they wanted to present to Singh because he had got them some contracts. The lady was very pleased, accepted the present, and saw her guests to the door.

However, after they had

left, she became suspicious as the box was exceptionally heavy and thoughts of time bombs ran through her mind. "Police!" she yelled, and the top brass came running. It took them all of three hours to open the box —very, very carefully—and the lady and gentlemen recoiled from the stink of six totally dead and decomposing rats nestling among carefully piled stones.

OLER TALK

Pity the poor minister:
struggling for years to
come a representative of
people he loves so much,
has to squabble with his
ds in the party for a
r in the ministry, where
zeal for selfless service
be fully satisfied. Could
one grudge him an air-
ditioner to take away the
of public service?



Rajasthan Finance Minister Chandanmal Vaid can't. And he said as much in a talk show broadcast by the Jaipur station of All India Radio. The logic behind the decision, according to Vaid, is not just a soft heart, but sheer productive mathematics. He said that a minister who works eight hours a day in the summer without an air-conditioner can work 12 hours a day when the machine is purring along.

The talk of cool and hot ministers apparently came when Vaid was asked to justify the expense on installing air-conditioners in ministers' offices. As for himself, Vaid is more modest: he can now work 10 hours a day with complete concentration, he says. The question is: how can the other ministers work 12-hour days and Vaid only a 10-hour day?

SEUM PIECE

He was a good monkey
e he lived: Mastan, a
sp ape who for three
ades was the unofficial
sman of the Indian Mu-
m in Calcutta, died last
th of cancer in the zoo
ital. And his passing
mourned by many, in-
ding the employees of the

museum for whom Mastan had been a constant companion. They brought tears and floral wreaths in homage.

Mastan was an endearing feature of life in the museum where, in return for a few titbits, he used to regale visitors with acrobatics and pranks, providing a welcome diversion from the relics in the place. Now he is no more.

But the authorities in charge of the museum are not going to let their Mastan get away so easily. After a while, his skeleton will be exhumed and placed in its place of honour in the zoological section. And so, even as the mischievous monkey was the centre of attraction in life, so will he be after it.

—Compiled by
JAGANNATH DUBASHI

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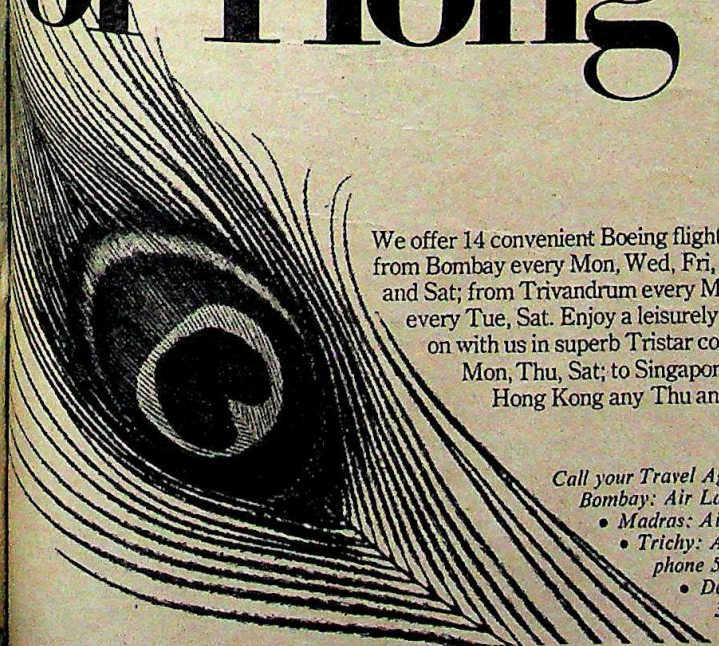

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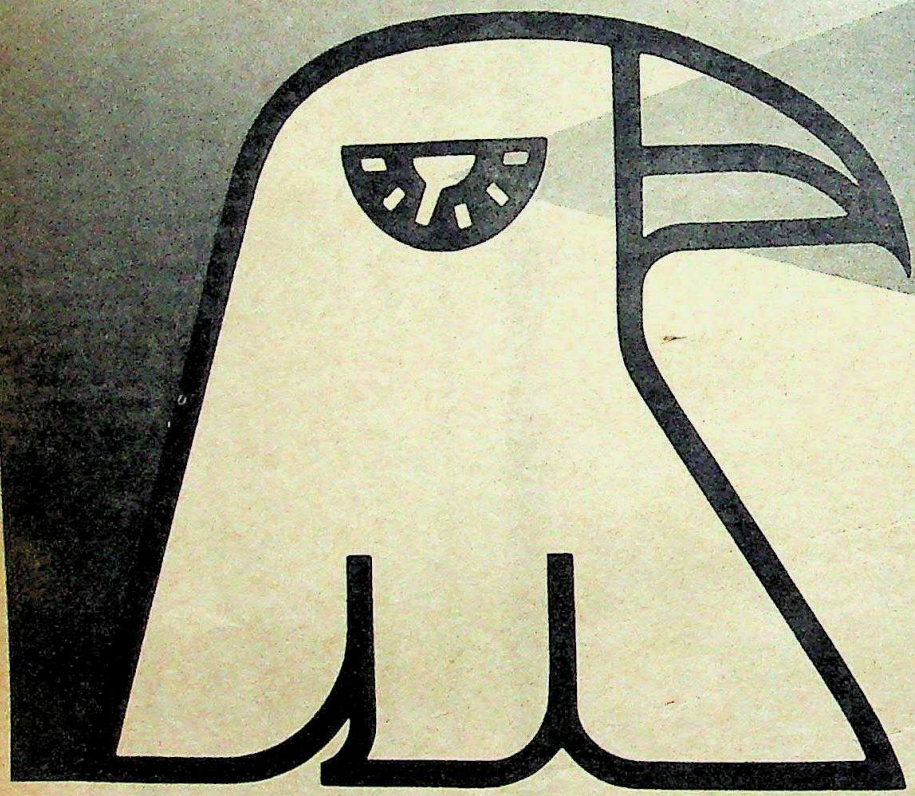

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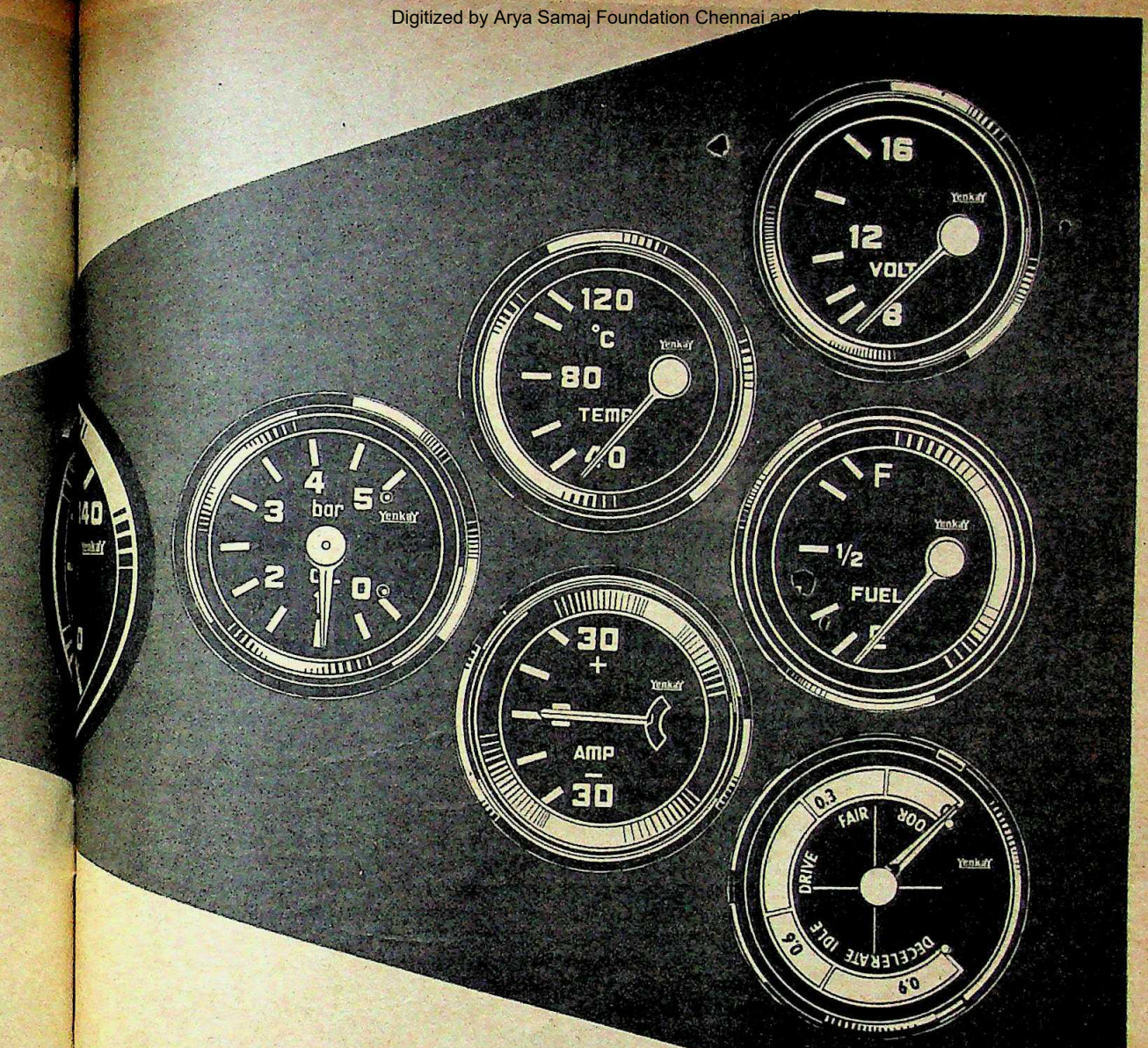

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JAMMU & KASHMIR

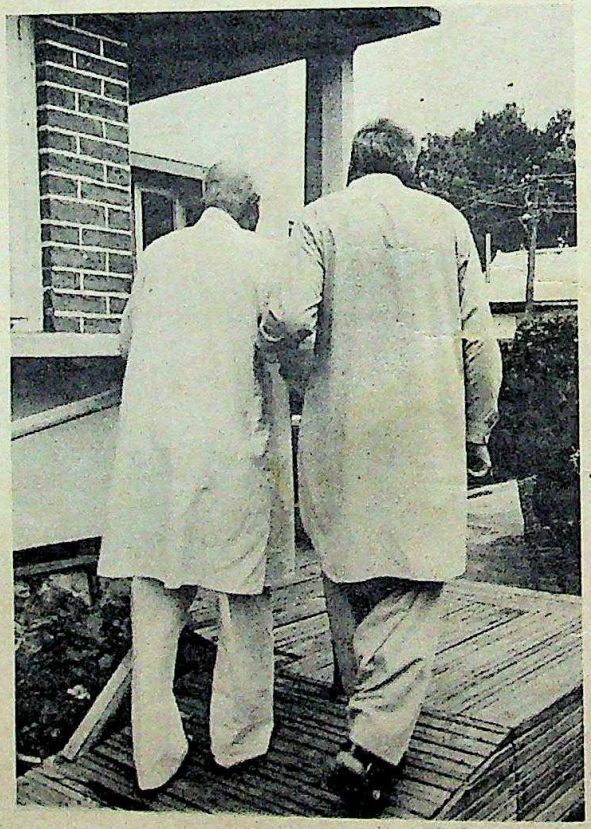
Smooth Transition

ONE ERA passed into history and another was born for Kashmir in the tumult of grief and tears—and some deft political footwork behind the scenes—as the state slowly emerged from the trauma of the death of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. The anointed heir, the Sheikh's son Farooq, who had been placed in line as health minister only a fortnight earlier, was eased into his father's chair less than 90 minutes after the 'Lion of Kashmir' ceased to breathe. The appointment was unanimously carried by the National Conference (NC) legislature party three days later in a surprising show of solidarity. Farooq's chief rival for the job, brother-in-law Ghulam Mohammad Shah, whose abrupt resignation last month cleared the way for Farooq, escorted the new incumbent to the meeting and in a speech that could presage a new, conciliatory approach, asked his party men to elect Farooq as their leader.

Shah, whatever his long-term plans, could not have done otherwise. Lakhs of Kashmiris saw Farooq for almost 11 hours ride the gun-carriage bearing his father to his final resting place. The identification in so intensely charged a setting was total; and if there was any moment when the mantle changed shoulders, it was when the cortège was in the streets of Srinagar. "No one would dare to create problems in this atmosphere," said one of the Sheikh's ministerial colleagues.

Seizing the moment in a dramatic gesture, Farooq made doubly sure that nobody could, in fact, create problems. At a vast public condolence meeting at Srinagar's Iqbal Park on September 12, he announced that he was dropping his entire Cabinet and would take new men to begin on a clean slate. The announcement caught the Cabinet members by surprise; Farooq had consulted none of them, not even his closest supporters who had at least in part engineered his accession to power. As the crowds roared their approval of Farooq's intention, glum-faced ministers took time to absorb the impact of the new chief minister's announcement. In guarded comments to the Press, they later described the step as 'excellent" and "bold" though there were others who felt that Farooq had erred in not telling his colleagues in advance.

If the transition was smooth and, for the moment, unruffled, it was so because of the Sheikh's decision to appoint Farooq as health minister last month (INDIA TODAY, September 15) eliminating the possibility of a succession battle. It was also because of the acumen of some politicians watching the family quarrel with alarm, who were determined to outwit Shah before he had any opportunity to intervene.



The Sheikh with his son: the last days

Final Moments: The Sheikh never really recovered from his heart attack last June; his age and numerous worsening ailments were insurmountable odds for even his powerful will-power and determination. The curtain rose on the final act of his dramatic life in the afternoon of Sunday, September 5, when his second heart attack in three months struck him down. Dr M.L. Bhatia, a heart specialist from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, had been summoned earlier and was able to take the situation in hand. But the end was near, and though he showed momentary improvement after this h... never out of the critical zone. Mrs G... flew in for a brief visit on Monday... Sheikh was sleeping when she arrived... was roused for a 15-minute meeting... Tuesday he was able to eat a lightly... egg and on Wednesday he even had... porridge. "We were getting hopeful..." said his Private Secretary Om Gupta...

So too were thousands of people... had begun to gather in the vicinity... Sheikh's home, some not eating in... anxiety for news of his health. In... quarters, contingency plans were... drawn up. Some politicians were beg... to discuss the problems of inducting... as chief minister after the Sheikh.

In purely constitutional terms, th... to be sworn in as acting chief... ter—pending his election or... someone else by the legislature... —would have been Finance M... D.D. Thakur, the next in se... Owing to the state's Muslim m... and its sensitive place in n... politics, Thakur would, like G... Nanda after Nehru and Shastri... been a passing phenomenon... move to swear him in might... reopened the succession issue... recently settled in favour of F...

Smooth Succession: So it w... when the Sheikh was again str... a fatal heart attack at a little... six in the evening on Wed... September 8, the Cabinet w... moned to Thakur's house to... developments—and clear the... Farooq's elevation. Farooq... time was offering prayers at the... city's famous Dastgir shrine... quickly summoned home... abrupt departure from the sh... fore the completion of prayers... ed off rumours that the Sh... died. The crowds outside b... began to swell, emotions r... high. More than anything else... to keep things under control t... announcement of the Sheikh's... was withheld till around midnig... Sheikh sank into a coma and died pe... at 7·40 p.m. Farooq was sworn in... Bhavan at 9·15 p.m. But in order to... that, the Cabinet jointly drafted a... Governor B.K. Nehru saying that... them could muster the support of... lature party, that Farooq should... in, and that they were confident... gain the unanimous support of... That night Farooq recorded a m... be broadcast the next morning... first act as chief minister. Interesting... learnt of all this later.

By dropping all his Cabinet...

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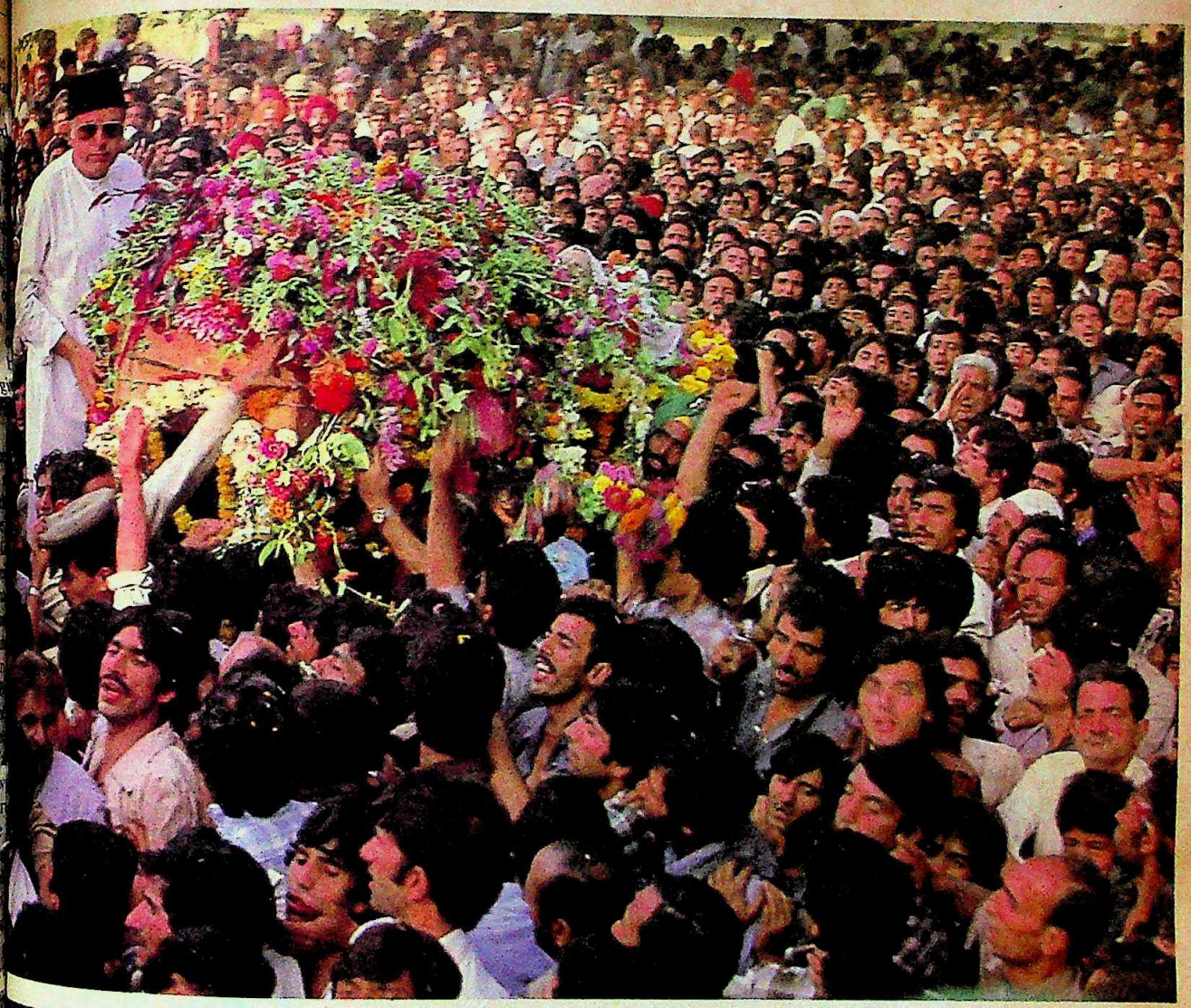

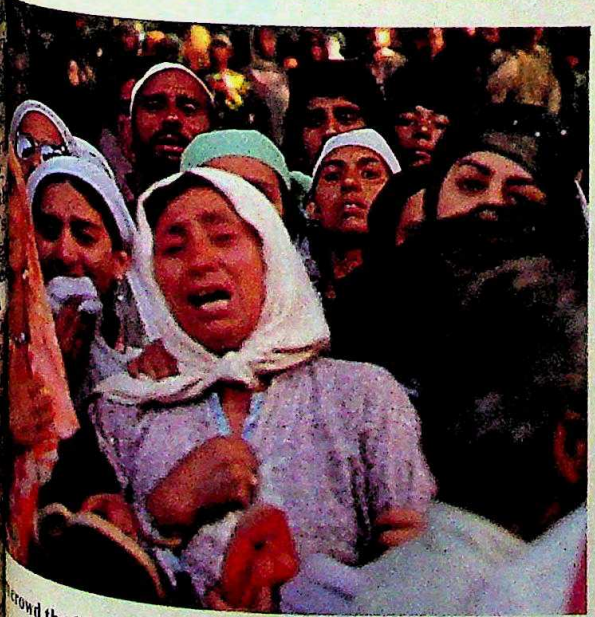

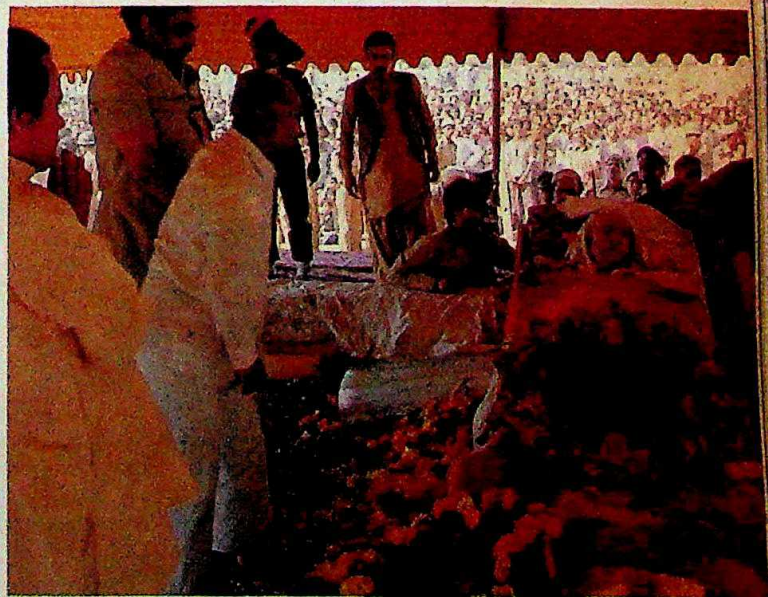

Crowd the Sheikh's cortege and son Farooq as the funeral procession begins its journey (above; anguish marks the faces of women (left), filing past the body of the Sheikh lying in state

Photographs by SUMAN DUBEY

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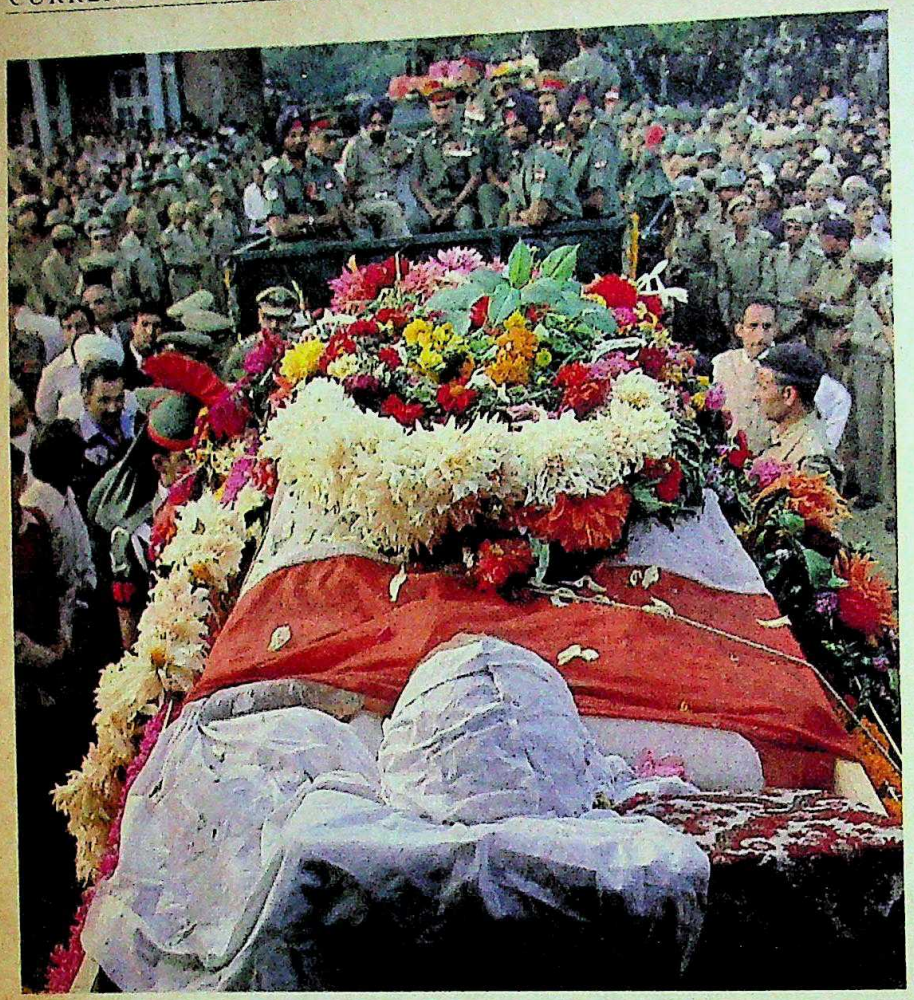
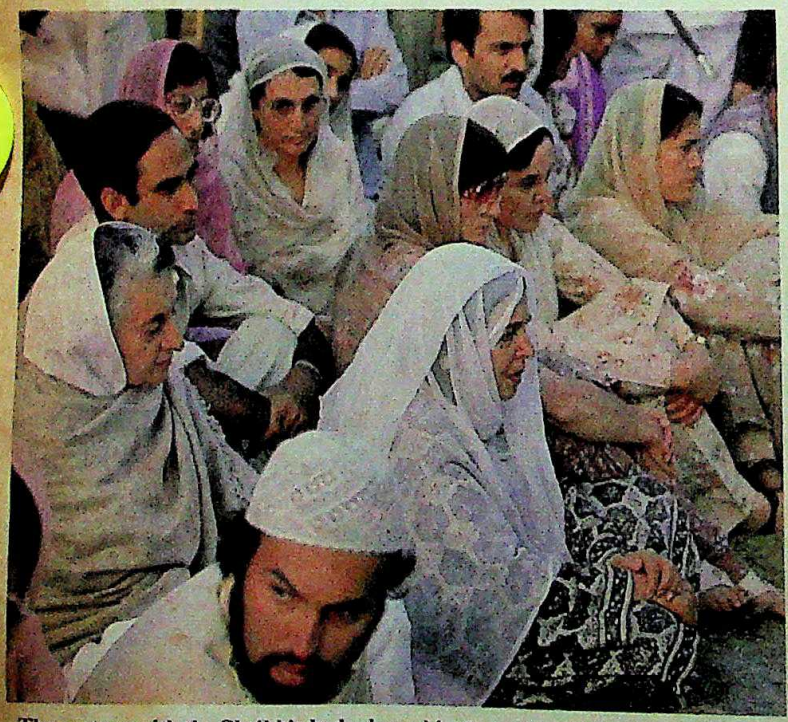
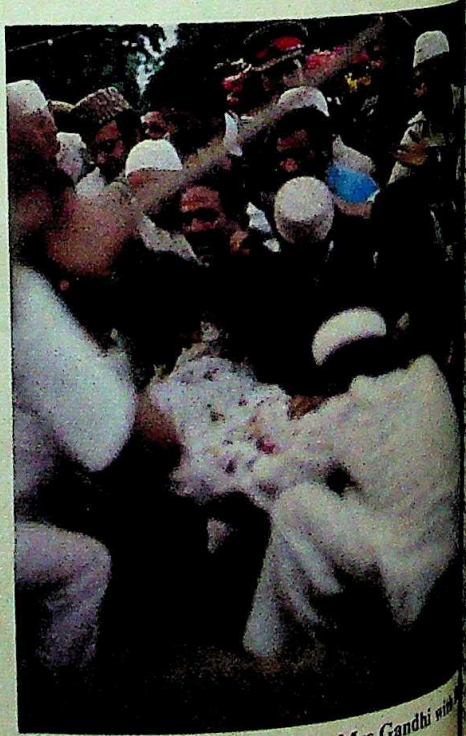


Farooq has neatly side-stepped the que
of inducting Shah into his cabinet. A
same time he was able to get out of a
constitutional problem posed by his a
ption of office. His swearing in was
after the Cabinet wrote to the Gov
endorsing his candidature, and afte
party had elected him. But, in orde
function with due authority, all his mi
would have had to take a fresh oath of
That necessity has been circumvente
Farooq's Iqbal Park announcement.

Farooq's position has also
strengthened by Mrs Gandhi's presence
Srinagar twice last fortnight. As a pers
friend of the Sheikh and his family
Gandhi made it a point to attend the f
But by doing so, along with Presiden
Singh, she also signalled to the peo
Kashmir that the Government in the C
held their leader in the highest esteem
was the first time, as All India Radio
made it a point to highlight, tha
President and prime minister attende
funeral of a chief minister.

Mrs Gandhi's interest in Kashmir
not have escaped the attention of
across the country's western bord
Pakistan where initial reports o
Sheikh's death spoke of a new uncer
with the state in the hands of the
Farooq. On his part, Farooq was qu
emphasise that he intended to strengthe
state's ties with the Centre, and ask
members not to say anything which co
misunderstood south of the state's





The cortege with the Sheikh's body draped in the national tricolour and the red National Conference banner (top); Mrs Gandhi with Abdullah at the graveside (left); the Sheikh's body being lowered into his grave

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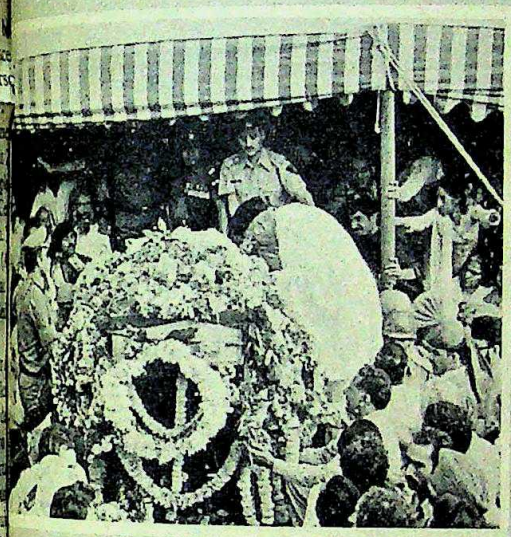
rest of the succession will ultimately
e next election to the state Assembly
sooner than June; and how well Farooq
the decay in the NC's public image
by corruption and poor
ration. The intense sentiment
by the Sheikh's death make the
position impregnable—for some
least. But sentiment can change and
will have to work hard to revive the
party's public stock devoid of emotion.

Before the Sheikh's death, a section of the NC spoke of electoral understanding with the Congress(I). It remains to be seen whether or not both parties see such an understanding to be in their interest. New Delhi's main interest lies in a government in Kashmir which keeps extremists and secessionists in check, and keeps communal harmony. And, Mrs Gandhi will probably leave alone an NC government which does that. Sheikh Abdullah succeeded by the sheer weight of his personality, the true ring of his secular convictions and his sense of being one with India. Farooq is no less well intentioned, but in order to succeed, having stepped into his father's shoes, he must grow to fill the vast vacuum left by the Sheikh as best he can.

—SUMAN DUBEY in Srinagar



Farooq pays homage before the funeral procession

FUNERAL

motional arewell

IT WAS a day of unbridled emotion as Kashmir bid Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah a tearful, memorable farewell. ver of humanity flowing over every of available road space stretched kilometres or more before and the 130 mm field gun on which the h made his last journey. Not a ow was unoccupied, nor a roof-top ge vacant as his cortège inched its om the sprawling Polo Grounds, a 's throw from where he lived, to the ured Naseem Bagh 13 kms away, in adow of the white marble Hazrat- Mosque which had such a central in his life.

The sun's rays had barely cleared the ir of the valley on September 10 as n-carriage, the Sheikh's body in a ooden casket heaped with flowers, son and political heir Farooq ng vigil at his feet, began its journey ed by lorry-loads of dignitaries. army brass, men of the Sikh Light Infantry with arms reversed, and the pipes and drums of the Ladakh Scouts and Naga Regiment playing the Slow Death March.

The grief, as the cortège passed, burst out like an uncontrollable wave. The salutation, *sanye shero*—our lion—was on everyone's lips. People wept, they chanted dirges and mouthed melancholy slogans, beat their breasts in rhythmic frenzy and flung flowers as the body of their *baba*—father—wove through the narrow streets of the old city, taking a route as he had requested, passing Srinagar's main Muslim, Hindu and Sikh shrines. People fainted, several were injured in the crush, at least one person died accidentally on a day when possibly 10 lakh people came on the streets with remarkable dignity and discipline.

Leading Light: The voices of ordinary people told why. "I have known the Sheikh since I was a boy. He showed us the way to educate ourselves and our children. Till then the only education we knew was religious. *Unonain humko insaan banaya. Hum jaanwar jaise the*," (he made us into human beings. We were animals till then), said sunken-cheeked Mohammad Sultan, a 55-year-old stone mason from Srinagar. "He spent fifteen-and-a-half years in jail for us," said houseboat keeper Rathi, her lips quivering. "He gave our children education, he wiped out hooliganism. Because of him our daughters are safe in the streets at night," she said, "*Hamara qaum ooncha kiya.*" (He gave our community dignity.)

In words and images, people watching the Sheikh's body pass recalled not the leader of the Government of the last five years but the man who spent half-a-century struggling, and eventually succeeding, to give a voice, an identity and pride to modern Kashmir which in so many ways was his creation. "Because of his struggle we are living in the light. Before him it was all darkness," said Mohammad Maqbool, 60, a shopkeeper from Baramulla. "My parents did not have food to eat, we have food; my parents were not independent, we are independent," said a 20-year-old student, Abdul Ahad Ghani. Camping two days outside Hazratbal, waiting for the funeral prayers, the *Nimaz-i-Jinaza*, a 75-year-old labourer from the valley's eastern reaches, Subhan Tilli, said: "Before him we didn't have land; today, thanks to him, we are standing on our feet."

The sun was setting behind Kashmir's ring of mountains by the time the cortege completed its ten-and-a-half hour journey. In solemn procession, the Sikhs yielded to an honour guard of the Jat Regiment and a combined band of the Jats and Assam Rifles for the last steps to the grave. Then, while a lathi charge and brickbatting sparked off by tense crowds straining against a police cordon for a better view, momentarily cast a shadow, a volley of three rounds split the air and the last post sounded as the Sheikh's body, now wrapped in a simple white sheet, was lowered into his grave. Stone slabs were quickly placed over the burial chamber, and in a few moments all that remained was a rectangular scar of brown earth in a carpet of green. In keeping with tradition, the Sheikh was buried with his head to the north, face turned towards Mecca. He lies in a concrete and brick lined chamber, 10 feet long, four feet wide and four-and-a-half feet deep.

The Sheikh chose his resting place in 1978, close to a majestic chinar tree. The park was well tended after that, and only a few weeks ago a chinar sapling was planted a few feet from the site of the grave. The Sheikh wanted a memorial built that would have to do with learning. Plans are afoot to build four large quadrangles, one each for a library, a museum, a *dargah* to teach the Koran and an open pavilion. It was the way the 'Lion of Kashmir' wanted to mark the spot where the earth finally claimed him.

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NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT

Golden Opportunity

AS BEFITTING a 21st birthday bash, it promises to be an elaborate and prestigious affair. The guest list will comprise an estimated 3,000 people from 95 countries including at least 90 heads of state. But for hosts, New Delhi, the problems are just beginning. Last fortnight, when it was officially announced that the seventh non-aligned summit was being shifted from Baghdad to New Delhi, it left the reluctant hosts with less than six months to prepare for the occasion.

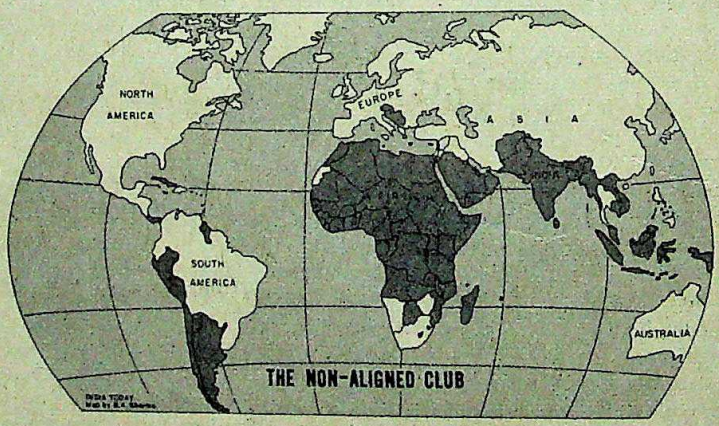
Foreign Ministry Secretary Natwar Singh said: "It is stupendous task. Such a conference has never been held in India before." The Indian Government, however, was guilty of some unnatural coyness over the issue. It has been evident for at least two months now that the Iran-Iraq war would preclude any possibilities of holding the summit in Baghdad as originally scheduled. There were only two countries capable of hosting the summit at such short notice: Cuba, which hosted the last summit in 1979 and by virtue of that fact is the current chairman of the movement, and India. Even so, it was obviously a 'no contest'.

Dilly-dallying: India is a founding member of the movement and has never hosted a conference. Cuba's performance as chairman since 1979 has come in for some sharp criticism from other members, mainly for its efforts to divert the movement into a pro-Soviet tangent. Consequently, Cuban leader Fidel Castro's swift response to host the Baghdad summit was doomed to be blackballed.

Till at least six weeks before the official announcement it was fairly obvious that a majority of the non-aligned club was in favour of New Delhi as the summit venue. Even then, India's coyness reached rather farcical lengths. On August 26, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced at a press conference in Port Louis that India would host the summit. A news agency reporter present immediately filed the story to New Delhi. Late that evening, officials from the prime minister's secretariat frantically contacted the agency and requested it to withdraw the story. The reason: a formal decision about the Summit had not been taken and it would not be proper for India to make a premature announcement.

The story was not withdrawn and was followed shortly by the official announcement from Cuba. Ironically, preparations to host the summit had already started in New Delhi with Natwar Singh put in charge and other senior Foreign Ministry officials booking flights to non-aligned capitals to hammer out the proposed agenda. India's reluctance, however, is understandable. It was in fact planning to make a bid for the 1985 summit but was virtually presented with a *fait accompli* when Iraq's Saddam Hussain finally abandoned claims to host the summit last fortnight.

Complex Task: According to current indications, the summit will kick off on February 25, 1983 with a meeting of the coordination bureau, followed by a three-day meeting of foreign ministers before the heads of state begin their official four-day deliberations on March 2. Present estimates put the official head count at around 3,000, plus another 20 invited delegations from organisations like the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), African National Congress (ANC), South-West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) and the UN. In addition, approximately 1,000 foreign newsmen will also descend on New Delhi, making it the largest conference of the kind to be held in the country.



It is undoubtedly a stupendous task. The problems of organising security, accommodation, transportation, entertainment, communications, documentation and translation facilities for the summit is a daunting operation. Added to this is the fact that the actual preparations for the summit can only begin in earnest after the Asian Games end on December 4. In January the capital will be caught up in Republic Day preparations which also coincide with the peak tourist season. In February Mrs Gandhi is sc... be heavily involved with election ca... in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka... meeting itself will have started by t... the budget is presented to Parlia... February 28.

One indication of the extent of t... is the fact that Iraq had already spe... years and an estimated $350 million... crore) in preparations for the abort... mit. Cuba put up more or less t... amount for staging an elaborate a... 1979, with separate villas for each ... state. In the three months after th... that India will have to prepare, it... be hard pressed to even provide... accommodation.

Gains: But even with all the pro... it faces, the country could ill afford ... down the offer. The gains of hos... summit, both in terms of prestige an... tical clout, far outweigh the hurdles... Gandhi, as prime minister of the ... country, will automatically take ov... reins of the movement till the next ... in 1985.

For these three years India, as ch... of the club, will play a dominating ... the movement's shaping and strat... Mrs Gandhi, if she so chooses, can ... back onto the rails of ne... Of course, with coun... diverse and committed ... and Vietnam on the on... and Saudi Arabia and ... pore on the other, an... aligned resolution of ... tion boils down to the ... common denominator ...

Israel's destruction ... rut is certain to receiv... unanimous condemnat... the fact that the Ara... looked the other way d... conflict will water dow... derably any resolution ... agree to in New Delhi. ... larly, it is difficult to see a non-... member state like Mozambique agr... stop trade with South Africa, ... largest trading partner. Similarly, ... going Iran-Iraq war (which, ... brought the summit to New Del... throw up its own embarrassing pro...

But even so, the chairmanship ... India a tremendous opportunity ... that the movement is alive and ki... to paper over some of the more ... cracks it has developed. For the ... India will head the largest and p... the most powerful global club. ... doesn't make the kind of obvious ... that Castro's Cuba did, it should ... from that experience far richer ... prestige and political punch.

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Appu Goes To School

WHAT weighs over half-a-tonne, stands on one leg at the drop of a hat, and swallows ...ls of kheer and mounds of bananas ...en not trying to garland somebody ...h a thick piece of nylon rope? Answer: ... elephant called Appu, the most fa... ...us of its breed in the country today, ...ich will be the cynosure of all eyes in ...lhi's Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium on ...ovember 19 when she puts a real gar... ...d around President Zail Singh's neck ...mark the opening of the Asian Games. ...r the last month, the 13-month-old ...ppu is preparing for her great moment ... the Apollo Circus in the dingiest of ...gy fields in Kanpur, watched over by ...cus Managing Partner C.V. ...eedharan and trainer Babu K. Nayar.

Appu came to Apollo Circus as a ...htened young miss on July 1. It ...k four hours to separate her from ...alati, her mother, in the Pakhui ...ildlife Sanctuary, Arunachal Pradesh. ...ys Sreedharan: "We had to enlist the ...p of a trained male elephant to keep ... mother at bay. Appu was crying all ... time and we feared that her eight... ...er-old sister would hear her in the ...gle and come to the rescue, so we ... her away as quickly as possible." ...e circus was then playing at nearby ...pur, and when it left for Kanpur, a ...teary Appu left with it. By then, ...wever, she had found a stepmother ...Sita, one of the circus's 10 elephants.

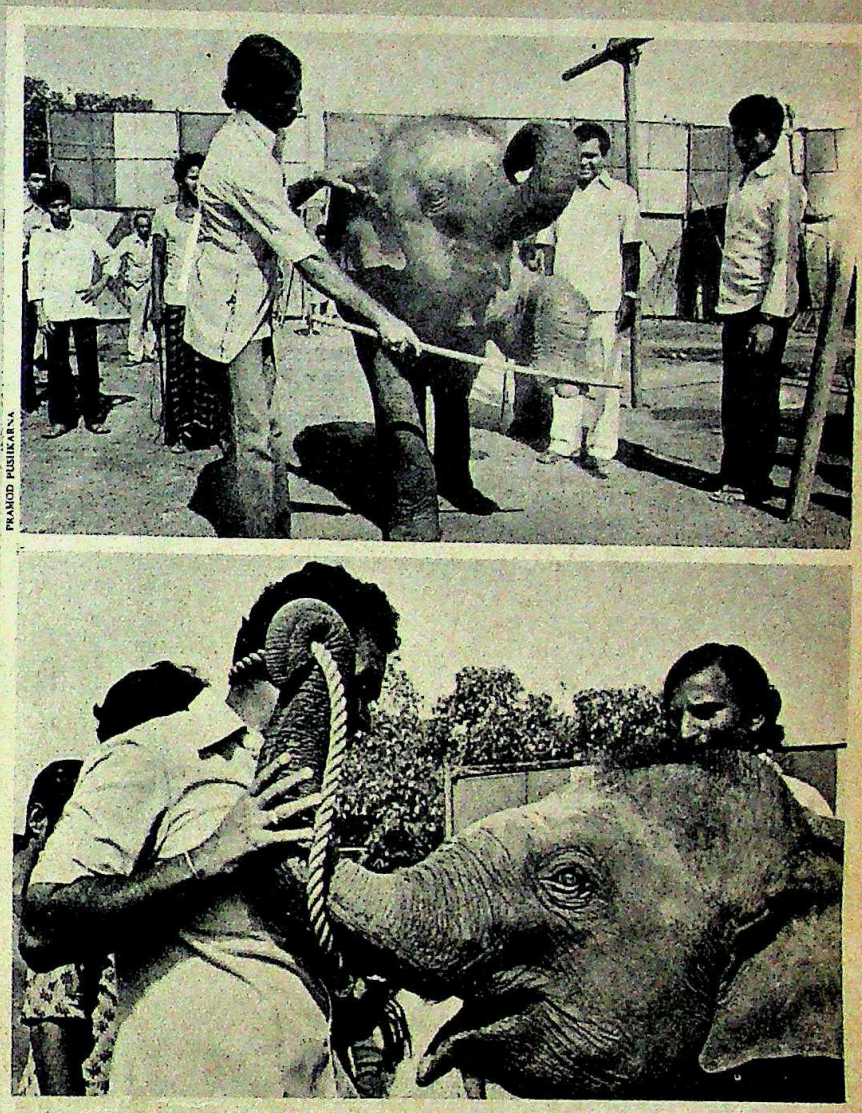
Sreedharan says that the plan to ...a real, live mascot for the Asiad ...been mooted by Buta Singh, chair... ...of Asian Games Special Orga... ...g Committee, and Apollo Circus ...e of the largest in the country—of... ...d to train the baby as a "service to ...nation". Appu started going to ...ol on August 1 in Kanpur, and ...ar says she learnt her lessons quick... "She is a very intelligent elephant," ...enthuses. "Over two-thirds of the ...rse is over and we are confident ... she will do a smooth job at the ...es."

Rigorous Training: The mascot ...up early in the morning, eats up ...ever is put in her way—the diet is ...ery rich one, and includes jaggery ...nice, so that Appu will present a ...poly figure as she bounds up to ...e the President. The training area is a cramped area marked off by poles; the sole item of furniture is a battered metal stool. With a series of stuttered orders, Nayar taps Appu's forelegs to make her stand on her hind limbs and do a *namaste*, taps her hind legs to make her stand on one leg on her stool, taps her head to make her kneel and touch her forehead to the ground in supreme obeisance. This routine is repeated monotonously over two sessions, each of about two hours, in the morning and in the evening.

In the beginning, Appu was reluctant to learn and this shows in the cruel gashes on her limbs and trunk where the ropes used to haul them up and down have cut deeply. Today, they are healing, but turmeric powder is still rubbed into the wounds. The ropes are still used: when Appu feels them biting too deep, she lets out an anguished roar and tries to escape.

Twice or three times a week, Appu and the other elephants are led in a procession to the river some distance away. The elephant usually clings to Sita and whenever she is made to lead the way, roars her protest. Jagdish Sahadevan, Sreedharan's partner, affirms that their next worry is how Appu will behave in a crowd. So far, she has led a sheltered existence but no one knows whether she will keep her cool when confronted with 75,000 people at the opening ceremony. Says Sreedharan: "We will ask for permission to take Appu into the circus ring to get her used to people." If the elephant learns that lesson as well as she is learning the others, then she will most likely be the *prima*-est of the *donnas* on the great day in November.

—JAGANNATH DUBASHI in Kanpur.



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Nayar (left) at work on Appu (top) and Appu 'garlands' Sreedharan: star student

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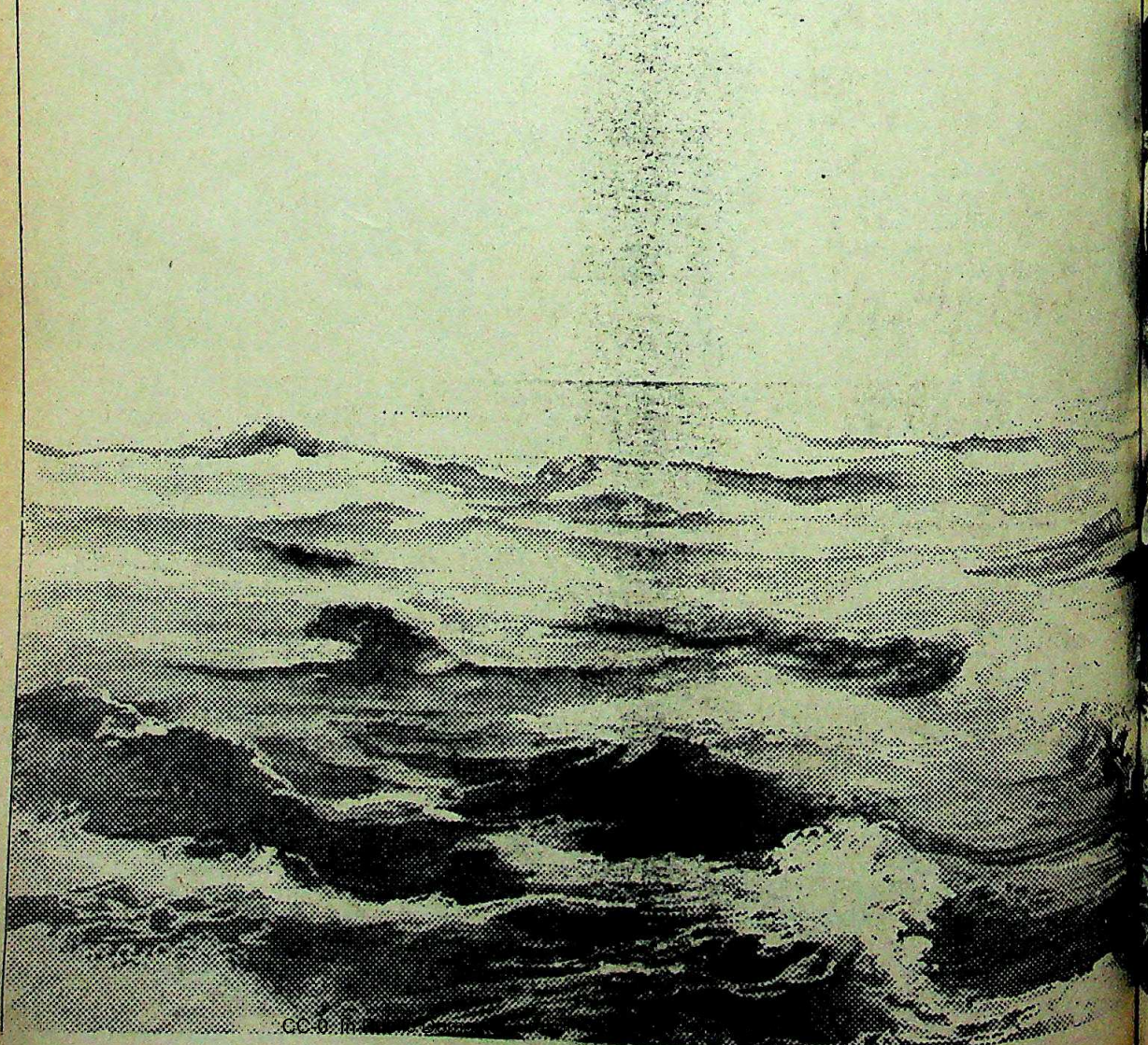

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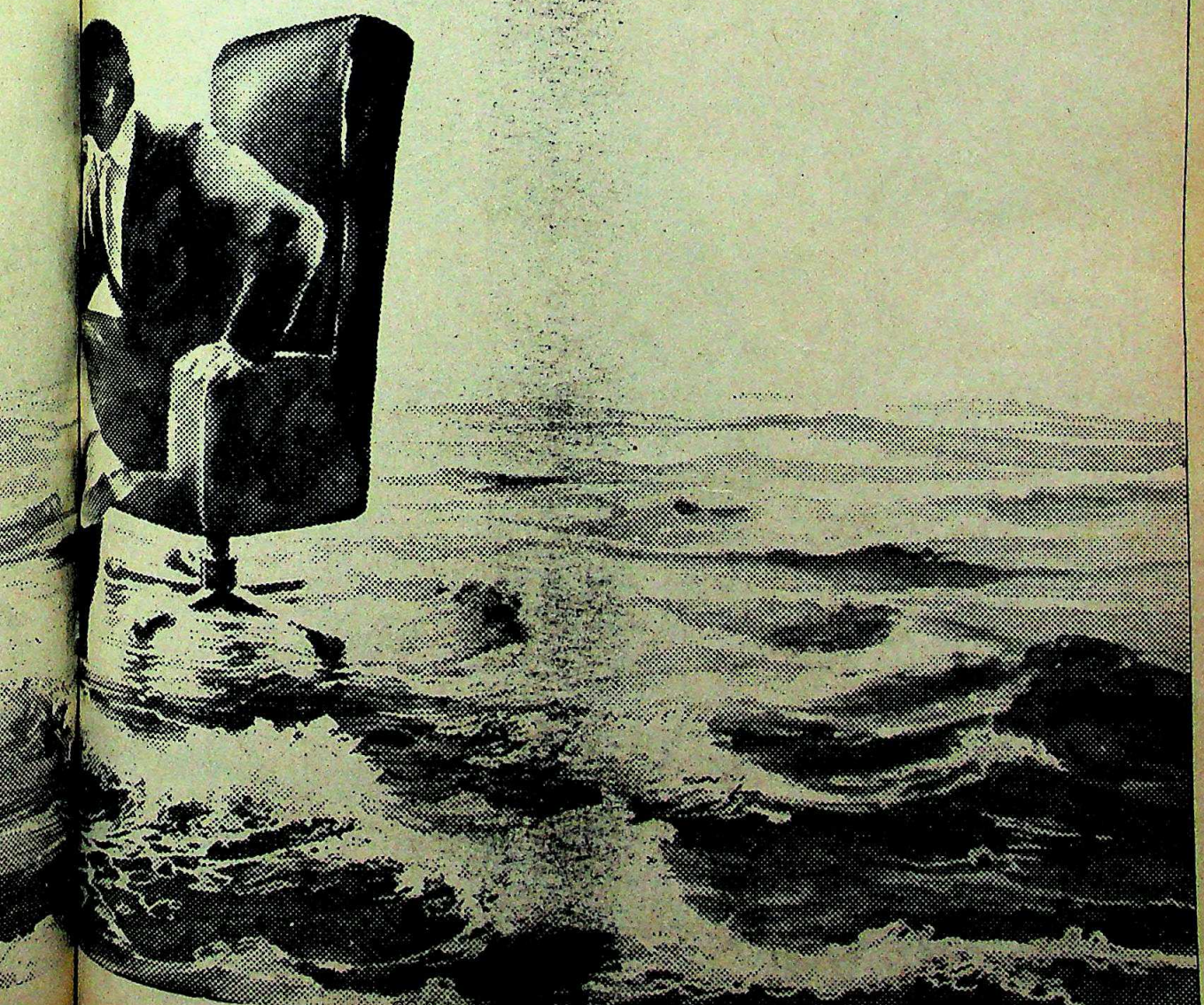

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in Bhagalpur!"

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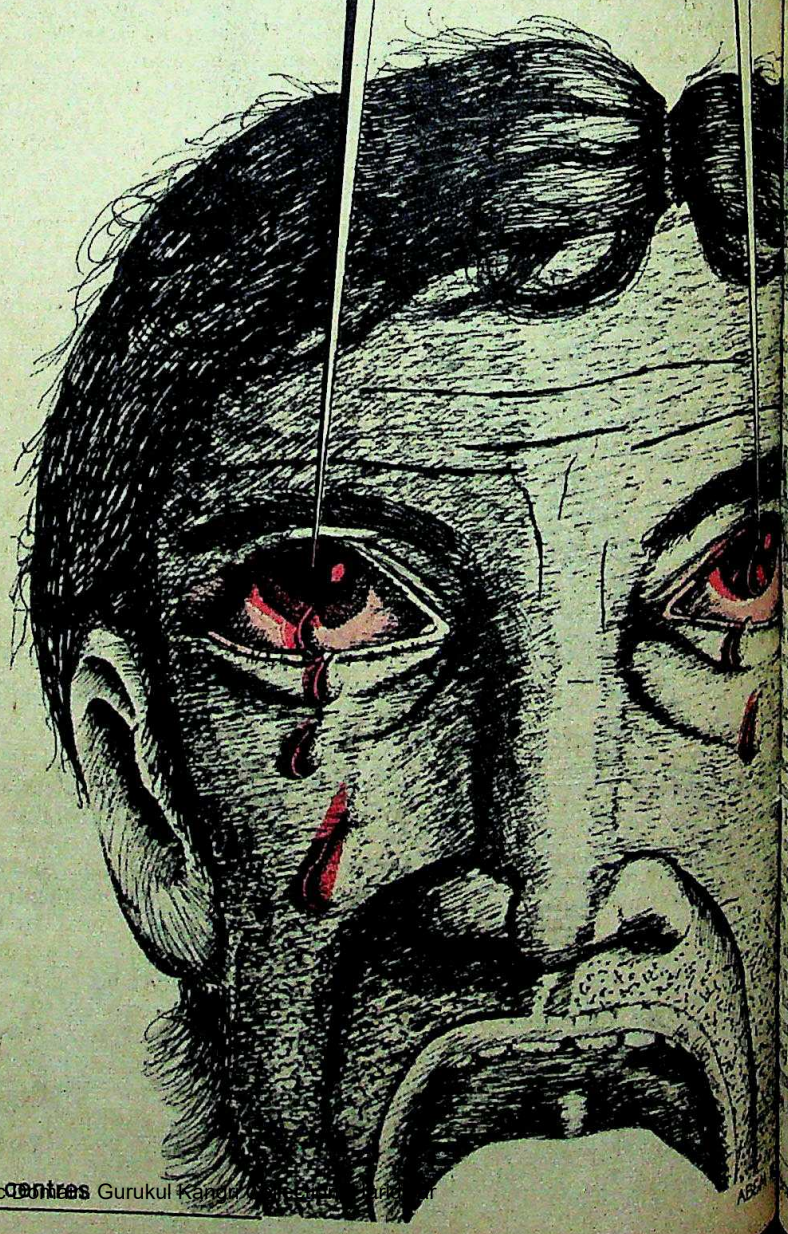

The largest circulated daily
published simultaneously from 10 centres

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Suraj Deo Singh: powerful clout

he Don Of hanbad

DHANBAD's dreaded Mafia gangs were riveting topics of conversation last fortnight, and for different reasons. Film actor Shatrughan Sinha, with the blessings of the ruling Cong- launched a film on the Mafia, swamp- town's hotels with an entourage of. nha was not being foolish in filming so ous a subject—his chief patron is swar Prasad Sahi, Bihar's health and welfare minister. And Union on Minister Kedar Pandey travelled way to Dhanbad to inaugurate the g of the film.

ewhere, the town's walls were plas- ith graffiti asking the Government to National Security Act (NSA) *détenu* ged Mafia gang leader, Suraj Deo nconditionally. Over the years, Deo has grown to outrank all his rivals hbad; he leads the Janata Mazdoor and so enjoys widespread support the industrial town's workers. Suraj as responsible for organising the Party convention at Sarnath last e is a major financial contributor to n Shekhar's Janata Party. He owns ema halls and a string of real estate es in Danbad, and has acquired a Hood image by financing the mar- of workers' children and installing ps in the town's squalid streets. Suraj happens to be an MLA.

July 27, District Magistrate J.S. arrested Suraj Deo under the NSA. who joined his post only four months has already roped in over 14 gang nder the NSA; he could lay his hands Deo because Deo made the mistake mitting two overt acts of crime within six months—he was indicted in an assault on Tej Narain Singh, a rival gang leader, and in an attempt on the life of S.K. Rai, a Communist Party of India (CPI) leader who leads another Mafia faction.

Hunger Strike: The day after his arrest, Suraj Deo's supporters launched a relay hunger strike in the centre of the town. On July 31, his lawyers filed a writ petition in the Ranchi High Court praying for his release. Says Brara: "The Crime Control Act (CCA), 1980, provides for arrest or externment of criminals. Over 109 proceedings are pending in this district alone, and we have externed only 39 persons. The leading Mafia dons obtained a stay order from the Supreme Court after their lawyers contended that there was a technical flaw in the CCA."

Dhanbad's law-keepers have encountered immense obstacles in their attempts to rein in the booming Mafia underworld. The second largest gang in the town is supposed to be led, for instance, by Satya Dev Singh, who happens to be chairman of the Zilla Parishad. Satya Dev's brother Shankar Dayal Singh, is Bihar's rural development minister. PWD and Industry Minister Yogeshwar Kumar Yogesh is alleged to be backing another Mafia gang. Satya Dev Singh has seven cases pending against him, including one warrant under Section 307 of the Indian Penal Code (attempted murder). In 1976, during the Emergency, Jagannath Mishra's government withdrew some key cases pending against Satya Dev. Since he and other gang leaders have been careful not to commit overt offences during the last six months, the NSA cannot be used.

"The NSA is hardly the harsh law it is made out to be," complains Brara. "Within five days of a *détenu's* arrest, we have to give grounds for our action. Within 12 days, the Government has to give its approval. And within three weeks, the Advisory Board has to meet to inspect the case." On September 6, the NSA Advisory Board met in Patna and approved Suraj Deo's continuing detention. No *détenu*, says Brara, has remained in jail under the NSA for more than three months.

The kind of power wielded by Dhanbad's Mafia dons was demonstrated by the protests that have followed Suraj Deo's arrest. Two weeks after a *bandh* crippled the town, Janata Party chief Chandra Shekhar went to Dhanbad to address meetings protesting Suraj Deo's detention. Suraj Deo has become the financial mainstay of the predominantly Rajput party; his lieutenant, A.K. Jha, is general secretary of the Dhanbad District Janata Party. Chandra Shekhar reportedly warned Kedar Pandey that there might be violence soon if Suraj Deo was not released.

—CHAITANYA KALBAG in Dhanbad

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Bedroom Politics

SEX AND politics make an irresistible mix. The ruling party in Himachal Pradesh is not too pleased about this, however, as one of its ministers—young, tall and handsome—is involved in one of the juiciest bedroom scandals yet to set the Mall in Simla a-buzzing. And the tremors have reached New Delhi, where the party high command is trying its best to uncover the truth—and smother the gossip.

It all started on August 12 when Sunder Shyam Chitkara, a young man from Moranda in Mandi district, who claimed to have Youth Congress(I) links, released a

Sukh Ram (left) and Ram Rao: who's guilty?

signed statement alleging that a minister of state had been sleeping with a call-girl in the brand-new, palatial Himachal Bhavan in New Delhi. He claimed to possess pictures of the two in the nude and in erotic poses, taken with a camera concealed in the room. He also threatened to make the pictures public if no action was taken against the minister. In private he named his target: Rangila Ram Rao. Having dropped that bombshell, Chitkara disappeared.

Turnaround: Before Rao had time for more than indignant denials, Chitkara surfaced and pricked his own balloon by swearing in an affidavit before a district magistrate in Simla on September 4 that Rao was innocent and that he had been put up to the whole story at the behest of Public Works Minister Sukh Ram, who is a strong challenger to Chief Minister Ram Lal for his post.

Chitkara, in ordinary life a fruit merchant, was in fact going to release his second bombshell in Delhi: this time about Rao's "second victim", complete with her sorrowing parents. However, he was persuaded by his friends in Mandi to put a stop to his revelations and return to Simla, where no

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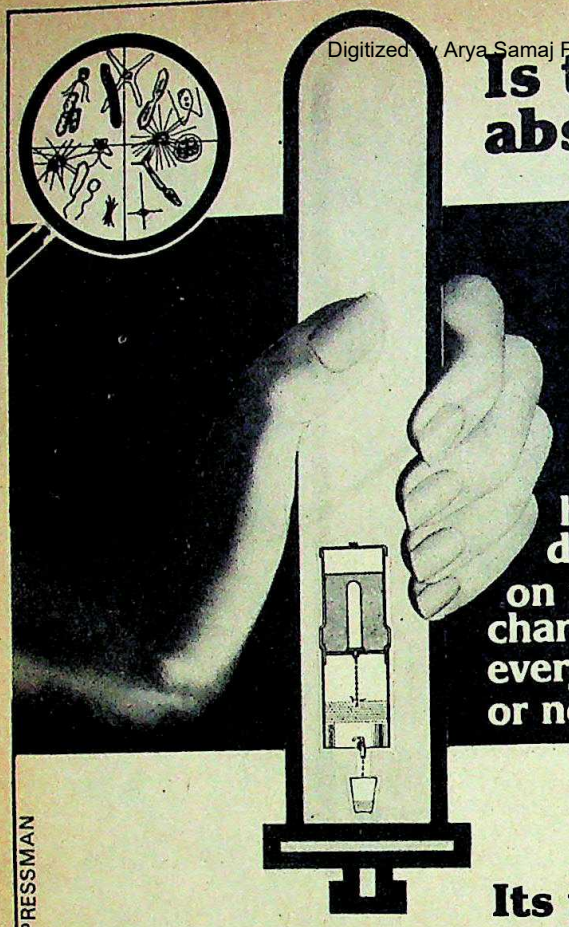

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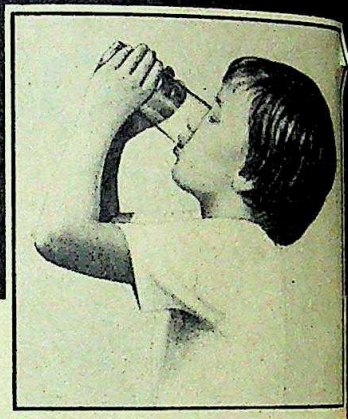

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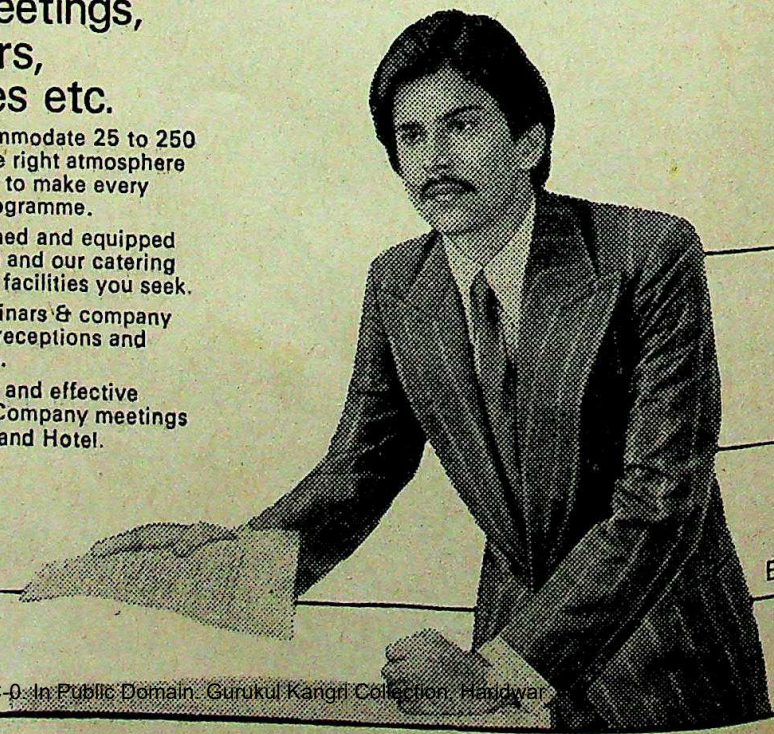

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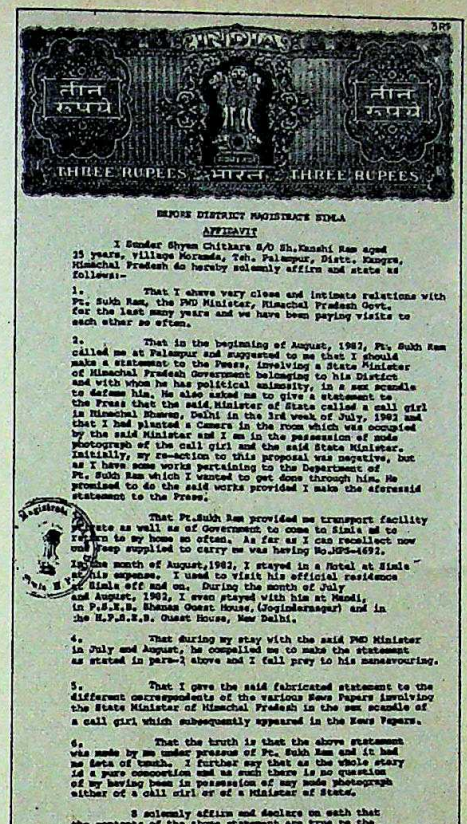
uld come to him if he divulged the about the whole "conspiracy".

affidavit, a bit of an anti-climax, The meatiest part of Chitkara's ion is paragraph 2, where he swears: beginning of August, 1982, Pt Sukh ed me at Palampur and suggested to I should make a statement to the olving a state minister of Himachal overnment belonging to his district whom he has political animosity, in dal to defame him. He also asked e a statement to the press that the ister of state called a call-girl in Bhavan, Delhi, in the 3rd week of and that I had planted a camera in ich was occupied by the said minis- I am in the possession of nude nths of the call-girl and of the said Initially, my reaction to this pro- negative, but as I have some works g to the department of Pt Sukh ich I wanted to get done through promised to do the said works d I make the aforesaid statement to n."

itkara also affirmed that Sukh Ram m him transport to Simla from his e recollected that one jeep in which lled was HPS 4692. Besides this, said, he stayed in a Simla hotel at m's expense in August, visited the at his official residence in Simla, and with him at Mandi and in New u Mandi in the Punjab State ty Board guest-house and in New the Himachal Pradesh State ty Board guest-house. Chitkara told DAY later: "I have become a terror corrupt in Mandi by unearthing scandals in cement, but this has up my business. I thought of washing me of my debts in this way."

tical Ploy: Chitkara's affidavit was ar Rao, who hadn't slept much since his release appeared. He complains y Prem Bhatia, editor of *The Tribune*, ented from publishing the release. owever, it is Sukh Ram who has about his image. Says he: "I have own this person in any respect. as he travelled in my car, nor has he with me. I shall not stoop so low to any political purpose. It was a big y those who wanted to cover their ings and tarnish my image." He the chief minister to charge and itkara. Adds the angry minister: the Government chary of taking egal action? The truth will come

itkara must have pleased Ram Lal ight face. Sukh Ram's discomfiture, temporary, compensates for the ent of his arch rival Virbhadra



BEFORE DISTRICT MAGISTRATE SIMLA

AFFIDAVIT

I Sunder Shyam Chitkara S/O Sh.Kanshi Ram aged 35 years, village Morenda, Teh. Palampur, Distt. Kangra, Himachal Pradesh do hereby solemnly affirm and state as follows:-

1. That I share very close and intimate relations with Pt. Sukh Ram, the PWD Minister, Himachal Pradesh Govt. for the last many years and we have been paying visits to each other so often.

2. That in the beginning of August, 1982, Pt. Sukh Ram called me at Palampur and suggested to me that I should make a statement to the Press, involving a State Minister of Himachal Pradesh Government belonging to his District and with whom he has political animosity, in a sex scandle to defame him. He also asked me to give a statement to the Press that the said Minister of State called a call girl in Himachal Bhawan, Delhi in the 3rd week of July, 1982 and that I had planted a Camera in the room which was occupied by the said Minister and I am in the possession of nude photograph of the call girl and the said State Minister. Initially, my re-action to this proposal was negative, but as I have some works pertaining to the Department of Pt. Sukh Ram which I wanted to get done through him. He promised to do the said works provided I make the aforesaid statement to the Press.

3. That Pt.Sukh Ram provided me transport facility from State as well as of Government to come to Simla and to return to my home as often. As far as I can recollect now the Jeep supplied to carry me was having No.HPS-4692.

4. That during my stay with the said PWD Minister in July and August, he compelled me to make the statement as stated in para-2 above and I fell prey to his manoeuvring.

5. That I gave the said fabricated statement to the different correspondents of the various News Papers involving the State Minister of Himachal Pradesh in the sex scandle of a call girl which subsequently appeared in the News Papers.

6. That the truth is that the above statement was made by me under pressure of Pt. Sukh Ram and it had no data of truth. I further say that as the whole story is a pure concoction and as such there is no question of my having been in possession of any nude photograph either of a call girl or of a Minister of State.

I solemnly affirm and declare on oath that the contents of the above statement are true to the best of my knowledge and nothing relevant has been concealed.

Deponent.

Sunder Shyam Chitkara,
S/O Sh. Kanshi Ram, Vill. Morenda,
Dated Sept.6th,1982. Teh. Palampur, Distt. Kangra.

Chitkara's affidavit: volte-face

Singh as Union minister of state for industry. Only last month, Virbhadra Singh, in a letter to the chief minister, had demanded a high-level probe into the illicit felling of trees in which, he had charged, close relatives of the chief minister were involved. Said Ram Lal: "In a way, a blackmailer has used us." He would not name the minister behind the affair, saying: "I don't know how to answer your queries but the truth is so well known."

Curiously, none of the players in the drama is going to court to seek justice. Instead, they are all making bee-lines for New Delhi where the party high command will have the unenviable task of sorting things out. An hour-long recording of Chitkara's "confession" and his affidavit are being sent to Rajiv. Sukh Ram and his friends will no doubt knock at Mrs Gandhi's door with their version. As the political judges untangle the welter of charge and counter charge, Simla's residents have much to talk about. —GOBIND THUKRAL in Simla

ANDHRA PRADESH

Rattling Skeletons

CHIEF Minister Bhavanam Venkataram is trying hard not to hear the skeletons rattling in the Congress(I) cupboard. But try as he may, they keep clamouring for his attention. Last fortnight he once again faced a furore after absolving Major Industries Minister M. Baga Reddy of guilt in what has come to be known as the Andhra Pradesh cement scandal.

The scandal erupted once again after the *Indian Express* published the photostat of a letter written by the secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Builder's Association (APBA) Shankerlal Agarwal on August 18, 1981, asking the Government to endorse the association's request for an extra allotment of cement to the regional cement controller in Madras. Baga Reddy, better known as Mrs Gandhi's election agent in Medak, made a favourable noting on the letter asking the director of industries to examine it and make a favourable recommendation to the cement controller. More than 7,000 tonnes of cement is said to have been distributed among APBA members in December 1981 on the strength of this letter. Venkataram, however, maintains that the allotment had no connection with the letter.

Incriminating Letter: The most damning part of the new disclosures was that the incriminating letter was missing from the file that Venkataram had graciously permitted opposition leaders to inspect earlier this year. In fact, the Government now claims that there is no trace of it at all. Opposition leaders at once latched onto this fact as proof that Baga Reddy had plenty to hide and that the Congress(I) was desperately trying to cover up his tracks. They claim that the Government has been twisting and turning in an effort to wriggle out of the scandal ever since the cement controversy first came to light in February this year.

Then, as now, it was the *Indian Express* which set the ball rolling by revealing details about the allotment. The then chief minister T. Anjiah ordered the Anti-Corruption Board (ACB) to investigate the matter. Three days before Venkataram became chief minister a preliminary report by the ACB indicated that there were irregularities about the allotment and that possibly money had changed hands.

Venkataram, however, apparently fea-

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red that a crisis so early on would upset his position and tried to keep the whole episode under wraps.

In April he ordered an inquiry by a senior IAS officer Shravan Kumar. Blame for the entire affair was shifted to a relatively junior official, N.V. Nageshwar Rao, who was suspended.

But the Government never had any evidence worth the name to make its allegations against Rao stick. Rao appealed to the Andhra Pradesh Administrative Tribunal. Late last month his appeal succeeded when the tribunal ordered his reinstatement and censured the chief minister for not applying his mind properly to the issue.

Mystery: By last fortnight, however, there was still no explanation of how a letter endorsed by the minister to the Directorate of Industries had mysteriously vanished. An even bigger mystery swirled around the question of how a photostat copy of the letter which is a key to the entire scandal surfaced in the newspapers when it should have been in the possession of the ACB or the state secretariat while investigations were on. Says Baga Reddy: "A gang in the party is conspiring to malign me by starting this useless controversy soon after speculative press reports appeared in February stating that I may become chief minister." Anjiah, however, contests this saying, "I asked the ACB to probe after smelling a rat. Two ministers K. Prabhakar Reddy and K. Kesava Rao told me that collections were being made." Baga Reddy responds to this saying, "My conscience is clear. I

A. PRABHAKAR RAO

Baga Reddy: denials

APBA's Shankerlal also denies association had any underhand with the Government, saying: "Out the 125 members of the associa permits. If we are to strike a deal why we exclude half our members."

Whether money changed hands a matter of intense speculation. But remains that controlled cement co and fetched Rs 70 in the black m nothing else it seems likely that procedures have been contravened. are at considerable doubt whether the tries Directorate is the correct body cement. And either way it seems cer the cement scandal is going to take alongside the land-grab affair and b major issue in the forthcoming elec

—AMARNATH K.

TELEGRAPHY

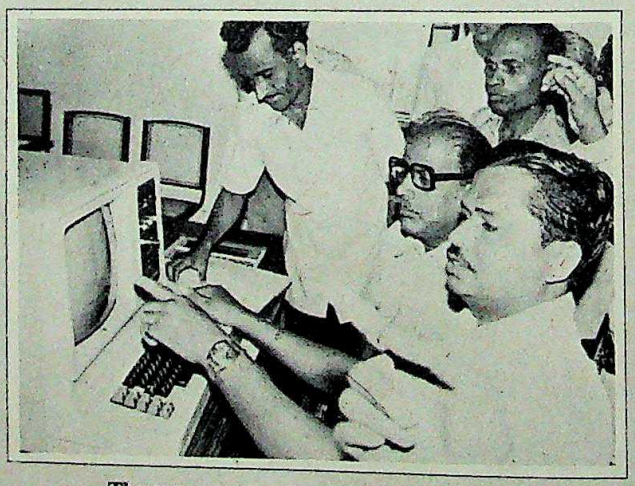
Ten Times Faster

FROM MORSE code to microchips —Indian telegraphy has come of age. On August 1, 1982 thirteen towns each in Tamil Nadu including Madras and Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh were networked into a computer grid to reach telegrams faster to their destinations. The entry of computer technology cuts down drastically the delays at the transiting points en route from several hours to barely a few minutes by sending the messages through the store and forward telegraph (SFT) system.

SFT, as the name indicates, is the nerve-centre into which the telegrams are fed by specially tuned teleprinters from the outlying stations. Here an alert memory system that can store up to 8,000 words with 30,000 more at the back shifts through the telegrams, rearranges the priority destination-wise and sends it out to to be received by the same teleprinters. "It is 10 times faster than ordinary direct teleprinter-link between any two places. At best an operator puts out 40 words a minute on the teleprinter between Hyderabad and Madras but the SFT spews out 400," says A. Subba Rao, chief superintendent of the Hyderabad central telegraph office.

The SFT's excel the existing modes in speed basically by economising on time taken at the transits. The person booking the telegram cannot make out that his message is passing through the SFT's but the one receiving it can see the code which is the job of a telegraphist.

The SFT, made by the Electronics Corporation of India Limited after joint research with telecommunication engineers in Tamil Nadu, is capable of tackling a common problem now faced as telegrams pile up when the lines go out of order. The present SFT model can store messages intended for six of the 13 outlying stations and resume transmission to clear the backlog without confusion as soon as the line is restored. When bigger SFT's handling 64 and 128 stations are developed, the problem of interrupted lines can be tackled on a still larger magnitude. The SFT system can effectively cope up with the needs of the massive telegraph network in the country. It has 20,000 telegraph stations, which an average clear 62 million telegr every year. The bulk of this gigantic is concentrated at just 415 stations each of these is equipped with SFT's, can reach a message faster than a per carrying it on a jet-plane", according Rao.



The SFT system: telegrams in double-quick

Cost-benefit calculations show in the long run the SFT's rake in profits for the Dep ment of Telecommunica after breaking even on capital costs in about years. A SFT system cost 10 lakh and each outlying printer terminal for Rs 70 And the fear that telegra traffic may fall thus cu down the revenue, is unfo ed even though the numbe telegrams sent has gone from 26 million in 1956 to 62 million now, as against steep rise in the number trunk calls from four mi to 200 million (excluding during the same period.

Says T.H. Chowd general manager, Telec munications, Andhra Pradesh, fidently: "Unlike in the West grams are here to stay. Eleven of 20 telegrams sent are only to co business discussed over the telep It is planned to introduce SF Bombay, Ahmedabad, Calcutta Agra or Lucknow in another ye this comes through, it will be a big forward.

—AMARNATH K.

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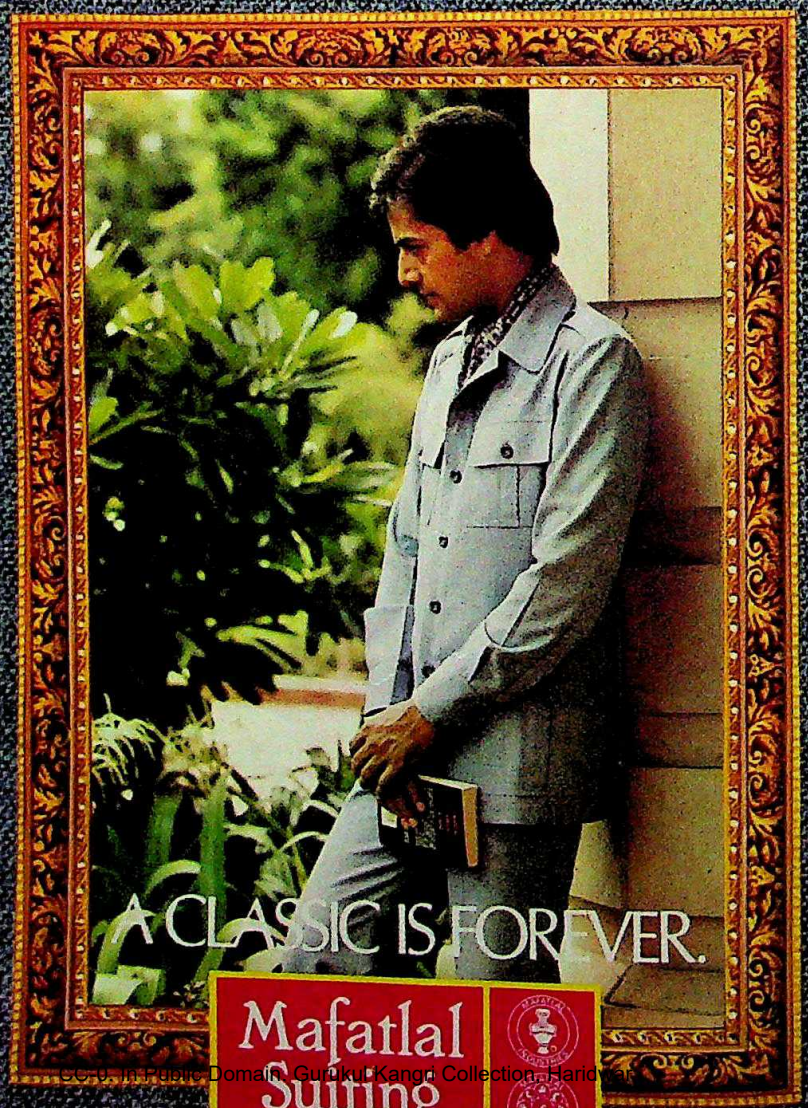

Mafatlal Suiting

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Law Unto Itself

THE North-Eastern Council (NEC) has never been a very popular body. It has been constantly attacked by the chief ministers of the north-eastern states who feared that its powers to e developmental work would tran- eir own. Others attacked it on the that its very existence was proof entre's patronising attitude to the st.

se grouses come to the fore every a while. The last NEC meeting, for was preceded by a vituperative by the President of Meghalaya's Demands Implementation Com- PDIC) Marlin Narayan Majaw, who widely circulated letter that: "The gards the people of the ast, particularly the hill as incompetent simple- be treated with cond- n, to whom the reins inistration and executive annot be trusted."

jaw's attack was bro- bout partly by the ment of Prakash Meh- the governor of Assam halaya. Mehrotra un- previous NEC chairman gh is not the combined of five states and was efore the automatic for the post. In fact it hoped that after Singh's departure, rmanship would go by rotation to ministers.

acks: The attack was not an isolated e NEC celebrated its 10th year of under a shower of fire from the parties which dominate the north- climaxed at the 20th NEC meeting e Chief Minister of Mizoram T. Sailo and J.B. Jasokie, the chief of Nagaland, opened with broad- ainst the NEC. Sailo said at a closed ting that the NEC, in fact, had little er its own decisions. He claimed along the secretariat has been e decisions" He cited the example, orth-Eastern Electric Power Cor- (NEEPCO) changing the original plan a transmission line from Manipur via Mizoram, for reasons of Another irritant that was con- rped upon was the virtual allo- a thermal power plant at ora in Garo Hills to NEEPCO which is sponsored by the NEC in the face of stiff resistance by the Meghalaya State Electricity Board.

Mehrotra was hard put to defend NEC and its subsidiaries. He pointed out that a team from the Central Electricity Authority had ruled that the 'balance of advantage' lies with NEEPCO and that the state electricity board should be sub-contracted works which it was able to handle.

Firm Rejection: The Meghalaya Government firmly rejected this argument. And for the loosely-knit coalition this may be a major issue in the forthcoming election. Regional leaders also claim that NEEPCO has been tardy about executing the NEC's 250 MW Kopili hydel project. Whatever the truth of this allegation there is little doubt that NEEPCO's functioning leaves much to be desired. The Central Bureau of Investigation is looking into charges of misappropriation against eight NEEPCO officials and the Central Government has taken a dim view of the corporation paying enormous amounts as compensation to contractors for delays.

At the August 26 meeting Mehrotra listed NEC's achievements including the Kopili project, the construction of 400 km of roads and the second Brahmaputra bridge near Tezpur which is under construction. He also tried to allay fears that the NEC would in any manner erode the authority of the constituent states, saying that, "the NEC has never eroded that authority or autonomy of the constituent states and Union territories. NEC has never done so in the past nor would it do so in future". His assurance, however, was greeted with scepticism by the regionalists who regard the NEC with its colossal sixth plan outlay of Rs 340 crore, with another Rs 95 crore expected, as something of a law into itself.

The regionalist also fear the NEC for other reasons. The NEC Act of 1971 states that the council, with the governors and the chief ministers of the seven north-eastern states and Union territories as its members will be an "advisory body" to advise the constituents and the Centre on developmental activity. They also point to another thorny sub-clause which empowers the council to periodically review the law and order measures taken by the constituent states and also recommend further measures considered necessary for this purpose. This power has only been used once—disastrously. The meeting called by L.P. Singh drew immediate protests from the constituent states and also caused recriminations in the higher echelons of the army.

But the regionalist remain wary of the NEC. They question the achievements asking why a state should forfeit normal developmental work like road and bridge building to an outside agency.

Congress(I) leaders defend the NEC saying that it was meant to exercise some sort of a supervisory control over the small financially unviable states. But even they admit that this could have been done with more finesse and tact. Says a Meghalaya Congress(I) leader: "The awe of the NEC is because of its financial and not executive clout. Its sixth plan is larger than that of any hill state."

But he says, instead of helping better governance of small states, the NEC has much to explain about the state of affairs in its secretariat. The posts of consultants for planning, power, agriculture, horticulture, coffee and tea have been lying vacant for a long spell. Mehrotra explains this saying that nobody wants a posting in the north-east. He adds that the NEC has been trying to get higher salaries for the consultants who are supposed to lead developmental activity. But as long as these posts remain vacant there is no doubt that the regional parties in Nagaland, Tripura and Meghalaya are going to target their sights on the NEC in their forthcoming electoral battles.

Mehrotra, Sailo, Jasokie and Majaw: an uneasy mix

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TAMIL NADU

A Watershed Battle

PARLIAMENTARY by-elections usually create few political upheavals. But the Periakulum by-election in Tamil Nadu has created history of sorts in one respect. With the national and both the regional parties like the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) going it alone for the first time since 1967, the Periakulum seat could be yet another watershed in Tamil Nadu's political kaleidoscope. While it marks the end of a 32-month political marriage between Congress(I) and the DMK, the agriculturally rich parliamentary seat is likely to witness a national party fighting hard to carve out an independent base for itself.

A record number of 25 candidates including nominees of the Congress(I), Janata Party, Communist Party of India Marxist-(CPI-M), the AIADMK and DMK are contesting the by-election scheduled for September 26. Amongst the important candidates are S.T.K. Jakkayan, an advocate (AIADMK), N. Ramakrishna, brother of Natarajan who held the seat (DMK), Sheikh Abdul Khader, a rich plantation owner of Madurai (Congress-I), A. Abdul Waheb (CPI-M) and M. Gulam Mohindeen (Janata). The vacancy was caused by the death of M. Natarajan, a DMK member.

It will be for the first time since 1972, when the DMK split into two, that Congress(I) will be pitted against both the regional parties who between themselves have ruled the state for over 15 years. Although the Congress(I) has been choosing its electoral partner according to its political advantage, it never fought independently of both the AIADMK and the DMK. While in 1977 it joined hands with AIADMK and scored a decisive victory, it deserted AIADMK in the January 1980 parliamentary poll which again, incidentally, went in its favour. Ever since then, both the DMK and the Congress(I) have been fighting the state elections together. Says Murasoli Maran, a DMK Rajya Sabha member from Tamil Nadu: "Any political relationship will last only when it is based on mutual respect and understanding. If someone tries to dominate the other, it will ultimately break. Our relationship with Indira Gandhi has paid good dividends in the past."

Fultering Alliance: But the dominant faction in the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee-I (TNCC-I) led by its President M.P. Subramaniam and a former DMK leader, however, feels that the DMK has lost its political glamour in the state and the Congress(I) will stand to lose if it continues its pact with them. Moreover, Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran's flirtations with the Congress(I) during the last 32 months provided an additional force to the antagonists of the Congress(I) DMK alliance. The relationship between the two parties, in fact, started worsening after the Tirupattur Assembly by-election in December 1981, when the AIADMK openly supported the Congress(I) candidate R.M. Arunagiri, who defeated the Janata and CPI candidates. MGR not only campaigned vigorously for four days but also opened over 100 AIADMK offices for conducting the Congress(I) campaign. DMK on the other hand did not contest the election as their leaders kept away.

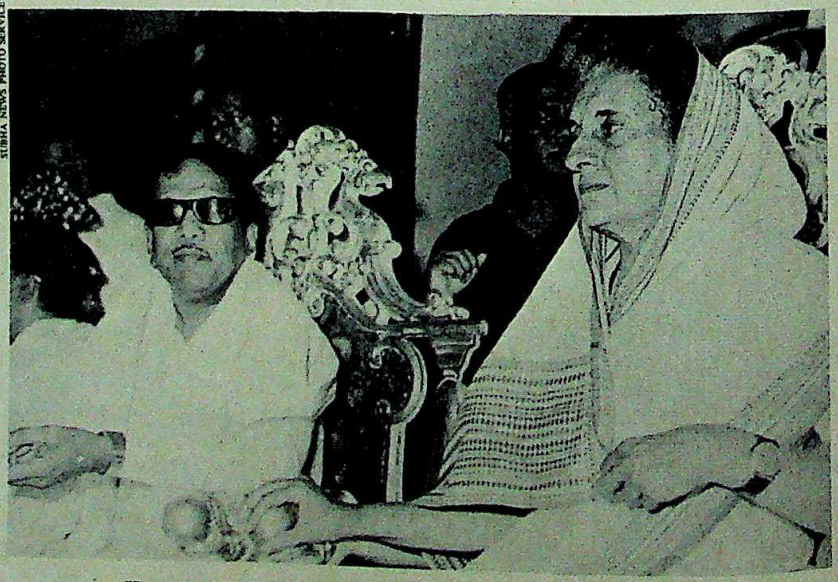
Ever since the Tirupattur by-election, MGR has been trying to create a rift between the Congress(I)-DMK alliance. To attain his objective he even went to the extent of offering government jobs to Congress(I) nominees and support to Giani Zail Singh for the presidential election. MGR's attempts started paying dividends w... powerful Congress(I) faction led ... former Union finance minister R. Ve... raman and Subramaniam in a tactical ... voted for maintaining an independent ... in the state. Despite the opposition ... G.K. Moopanar, an AICC(I) general ... tary, the TNCC(I) in its executive com... meeting held on December 10, 1981, ... to contest the elections to 375 pan... unions independently. Since then MG... held over two dozen meetings with ... six Union ministers and state leve... gress(I) leaders creating a favourable cli... for the possibility of an alliance betwe... Congress(I) and the AIADMK. Meanw... DMK leadership played its cards close ... chest.

Careful Manoeuvring: Karu... flew to New Delhi and convinced the ... leadership that the Congress(I) would ... to lose if it violated the electoral agre... In addition, the DMK leadership re... from making any offensive state... against the Congress(I) leadership. ... DMK leader: "We are with Mrs G... the Central level but her supporters ... state are eating out of MGR's hands ... are not used to sitting in the Opp... because there is no glamour."

Aware of the fact that the Cong... could not win the election on its ... Karunanidhi went ahead and announc... candidate on August 27. He hoped ... confronted with a *fait accompli* the ... gress(I) would fall in line without to... protest. He obviously felt that while ... to make concessions towards the ... gress(I) he was not prepared to sur... the seat they had held, considering t... be too heavy a price for not so l... relationship.

Soon after the ann... ment of DMK's can... it was expected t... Congress(I) would ... strike a deal with ... Though willing ... port the Con... MGR wanted its ... to formally announ... end of the DMK ... ress(I) alliance in t...

Mrs Gandhi ... Shankar Dayal ... to Madras to ... MGR to withd... candidate from ... test. Since Sharm... lightweight in th... MGR could ne... tiate the terms ... ditions of an al... with him. The ... DMK alliance w...



SUDHA NEWS PHOTO SERVICE

Karunanidhi with Mrs Gandhi: end of a political alliance

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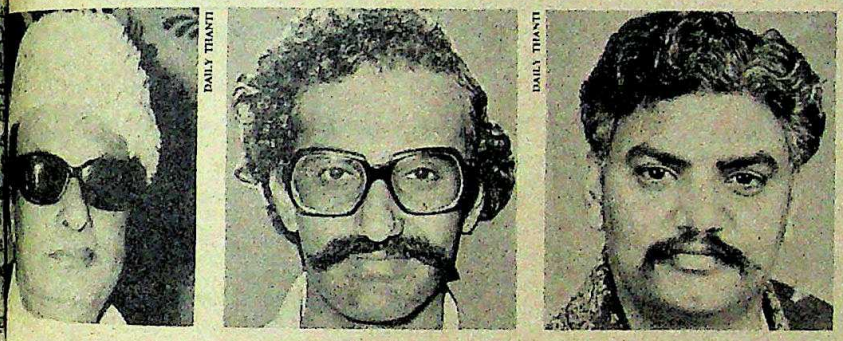
Sharma could not accept it publicly it would lead to the fall of Con- DMK Government in Pondicherry ing the support of 16 MP's.

Surprisingly, all the three parties, AIADMK, DMK and the Congress(I) maintained a cryptic silence over the issue. Said Sharma after his ssful mission to persuade MGR to the AIADMK candidate in favour of ngress(I): "We will have a friendly t. Anyway, a by-election doesn't make ference to a party which has two- majority in the Parliament," MGR hoed the same sentiments while add- an election meeting at Theni in Peria- constituency: "AIADMK has only two rs in the Lok Sabha and the women for the implementation of the scheme. The state Government promulgated an ordinance writing off the debts raised through private sources by the economically poor people. In order to embarrass the Central Government MGR even demanded that Tamil Nadu should be declared a backward state. Congress(I) on the other hand expedited the implementation of various Central Government projects in the state. Over a dozen Union ministers flew into Tamil Nadu to lay foundation-stones or inaugurate various projects. The most important was the Tuticorin-Madurai broadgauge line for which the then railway minister P.C. Sethi flew down to Tamil Nadu along with three other Union Ministers. DMK, not to be left behind, whipped up the



MGR (left) with Jakkaiyan and Ramakrishnan: electoral test

ss(I) has a huge majority and its or winning is not going to affect the ment at the Centre. And the DMK also t be affected by losing this seat. If K wins, its representatives will speak in liament about the good acts of the overnment and will urge the Centre to e state in keeping up the tempo of gment. The real fight, however, is n the AIADMK and the DMK."

e DMK leaders have not made a public er their strained relationship with the ss(I). In fact, Karunanidhi who was d to address a press conference soon DMK's executive committee chose its e, excused himself and directed ugham, the party's general secretary the probing journalists. When asked DMK's future relationship with the ss(I), Shanmugham replied: "This e can only be answered by our leader idhi."

Become Awaited: With the failure of ss(I) in securing the support of any of onal parties, eyes are now fixed on come of the by-election. In fact Karunanidhi and the Congress(I) en doing a lot of homework to woo orate. Recently MGR extended his fore midday meal scheme for ildren to the urban areas also. He the state Government to recruit

controversy over the death sentence awarded to Tamilian youths in Sri Lanka and organised a black day in the entire state.

Though there are 25 candidates in the field, barring the DMK and AIADMK candidates the rest fall in the they-also-ran-category. According to most political observers, the real fight will be between the DMK and the AIADMK and Congress(I) may not emerge even a poor third. The election will nevertheless decide:

- whether MGR still has control over the electorate or his charisma is fading;
- whether a DMK without the backing of a national party like Congress(I) can also win an election, and
- whether the Congress(I) can also make a dent in a state dominated by regional parties without support from either of them.
- If MGR wins, it will enhance his bargaining power and he will demand his pound of flesh from the Congress(I). In addition, an AIADMK success will also cause a further exodus from the DMK ranks. Says Arcot Veerasamy DMK's permanent office secretary, "The electorate of Tamil Nadu is going to reiterate that it wants a party which is theirs not only politically but socially and economically as well." If that happens Congress(I) will lose not only the election but a powerful regional ally as well.

—PRABHU CHAWLA in Madras

TRIPURA

Escalating Tensions

WHEN the Tripura Government initiated the Autonomous District Council (ADC), it was hoped that giving the tribals limited autonomy would help ease tensions in the state. It was also viewed as a test for the Marxist Government's popularity. In a bold move, the Government handed over the responsibility of developmental work in the tribal areas, which make up two-thirds of the state, to the 28-member council. Said Chief Minister Nripen Chakraborty: "It is an experiment."

The results of the experiment have been mixed. In the ADC election, held in January, the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) won 19 seats and their allies won two more—establishing beyond doubt their continuing hold in the tribal areas. This success has been counterbalanced in recent months by the flak they have received from the vocal non-tribal population, mainly Bengalis.

Growing Schism: The schism between the two sections of the population has been growing ever since the massacre of 300 non-tribals at Mandai two years ago. The Bengalis, who feel increasingly threatened, see the ADC as a 'gift' to tribal leaders who have expressed secessionist sentiments. They fear that the money allocated to the ADC will be diverted to the various tribal organisations. Quick to capitalise on this insecurity, the Congress(I), the principal political forum of the Bengalis, has started a campaign stating that a vote for the Marxists in the coming elections will be a vote for increasing tribal domination.

A growing antagonism to the Marxists comes through in statements like Bhupen Datta Bhowmick's, editor of the largest selling Bengali daily, *Dainik Sambad*: "We have definite information that the Marxists are seeking to use the tribal bases of Tripura for their politics of violence." Whether this is true or not, the remark acquires significance as Bhowmick's paper is extremely influential.

Bengali distrust has become an impediment to the working of the ADC, a fact that is admitted by its Chairman, Narayan Rupini, a member of the CPI-M. All the developmental work such as health centres and schools needs the active assistance of the Bengalis. But after the Mandai massacre very few are willing to take up jobs in the

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Landed at Palam 8.15 am. Zipped across to the Qutab by taxi. Ample time for breakfast.

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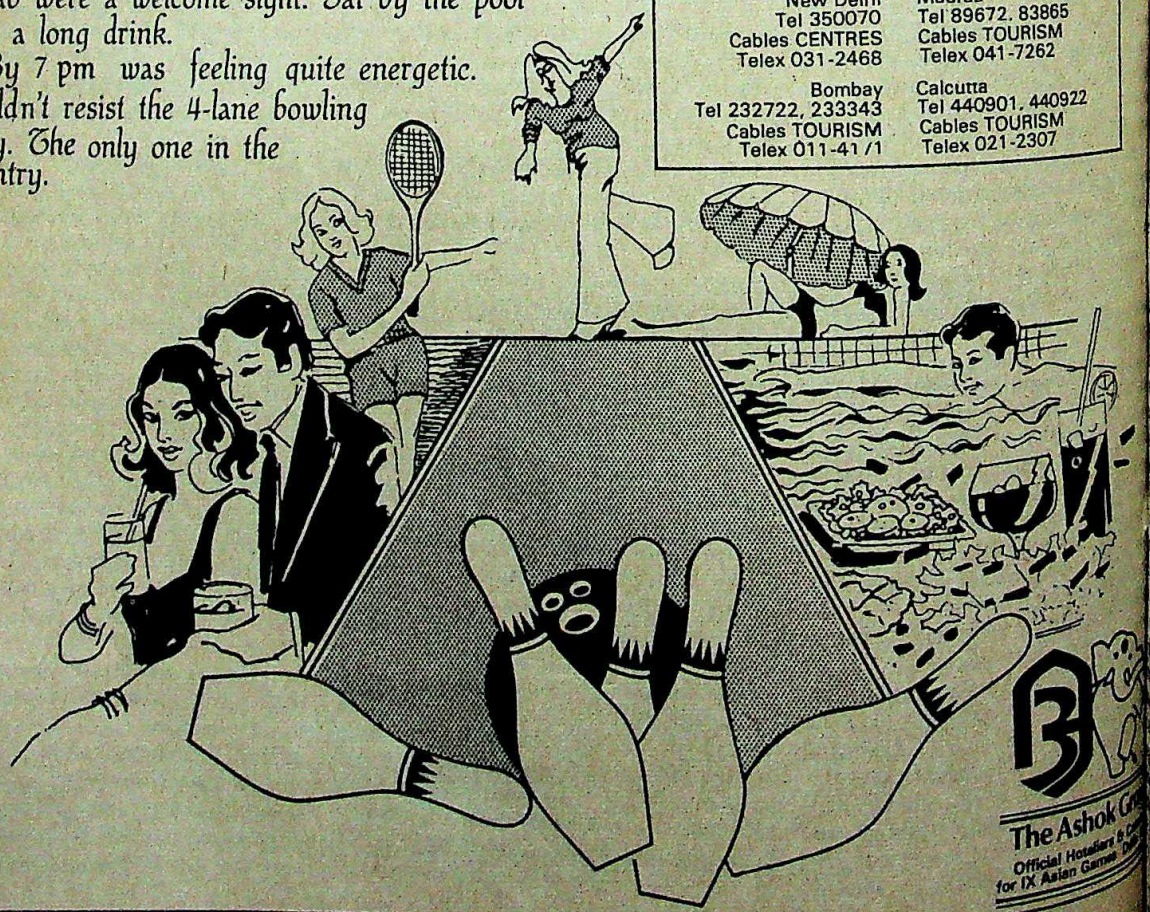

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most of which are in the strife-torn
. Complains Rupini: "Why should
be scared when we have given our
that they will be secure in our areas?
ve to take care of them as without
pertise we cannot function."

Spreading Panic: The Bengalis have not
ded overwhelmingly to this assur-
said a doctor in Agartala: "There were
when I thought nothing of driving to
bar (150 km from Agartala) alone.
ese days I will not risk it." The panic
es with daily reports from the interior
g the state capital of funds being
d forcibly by tribal extremists from
als, their ganging up with Mizo
and also of the creation of a "liberated"
the Jampui hills in the now dreaded
tion of Tripura, Mizoram and
desh. In fact the Bengalis in Tripura
little comfort from Rupini's assur-
when the chief minister says: "I have
ed numerous death war-
in recent months from
xtremists."

Dasarath Deb, one of
e powerful members of
ipura Cabinet, and once
d to as 'Raja Dasarath'
tribals, has received a
of these "warrants"
ing death for having
ed" the tribal cause.
ing to the Government's
timate, in the last two
eight members of the
ave been killed by tribal
sts. Even Deb does not
enture into the tribal
ithout police protection.
ief minister indicated that a section
Congress(I) as well as Tripura Upajati
Summiti (TUJS)leaders were in league
xtremists to create problems for the

the very nature of its function, the
ravates Bengali fears. Its activities
help the 100,000 Bengalis who live
dominated by the states' 500,000
To meet the prevailing food crisis,for
the ADC has sanctioned Rs 300
3,000 families which will enable
(terrace) cultivation. Non-tribals,
equally poor, are being denied this.

Tribal Language: Another area of con-
hat the children of non-tribals resid-
ADC-governed areas are instructed
Kakboro at the primary stage. This
interpreted as another attempt to
tribals, disregarding the fact that it
al for the largest student group to
in their own langauge. The running
chools, numbering about 3,000, has
difficult as there are not enough
achers and with Bengalis steadily
moving out, many of them may have to be shut.

But the biggest grouse of the non-tribals is the Marxist Government's intention of restoring the land that the Bengalis forcibly bought from the tribals. Most of the state's 16 lakh Bengalis are refugees from Bangladesh who, it is well known, had acquired land in Tripura dirt cheap from unsuspecting tribals. The Marxists started the restorations five years ago and so far 3,000 tribal families have had their land returned. With the setting up of the ADC, the process will be speeded up. Though the Bengalis are paid a compensation, anxiety is running high. Complained a shopkeeper in Agartala: "Where tribals are concerned, the law is always against us. But the Government should realise that we are also poor."

The Government may yet overcome the resentment if the ADC performs its political function which is to erode the tribal extremists and restore peace. The chances for this do not seem too bright. Said Rupini: "There are areas controlled by the TUJS where I could not set foot. Now as the council chairman I can visit these places but we are yet to be able to function politically in these parts."

Rupini: making doubtful assurances

Ethnic Alliance: Opposition parties like the TUJS have already stepped up their campaign that the ADC will only serve the political interest of the Marxists. It is feared that if appeals are made to tribal sentiments, ethnic considerations will, as in the past, predominate over all other factors.

Chakraborty is pinning his hopes on the divisions among the various tribes, but Marxist tribal leaders feel that this cannot be counted on. Said one leader: "There were differences among the tribals even during the Mandai incident but there was no open condemnation of what Bejoy Hrangkhal did."

TUJS leaders are still known to be maintaining links with the underground Jamatia extremists and it could be just a matter of time before the Jamatias patch up with rival extremists, the Halams, to provide the TUJS with an united underground wing. And with seven members in the ADC providing the only opposition, the TUJS today enjoys a fair amount of clout in the tribal areas. There is speculation rife of another tribal uprising. And going by signs, like Hrangkhal's mysterious disappearance and the killing of those opposed to extremists as well as the forcible collection of money, the speculation seems to be based on ominous fact. —SUMANTA SEN in Agartala

GUJARAT

Sins Of The Sons

POLITICIANS often have troublesome children. This is true in Gujarat as everywhere else, as Chief Minister Madhavsinh Solanki discovered when the sons of three ministers landed themselves in trouble with the police within the space of a few days.

The first of the three to enter the limelight was Narayan Jesang, the son of Khimji Jesang, the former deputy minister for Agriculture. Narayan was accused by a CPI-M worker, N.R. Ayachi, of stealing 10,000 litres of furnace oil last September. The complaint alleged that the oil had been siphoned off while it was being taken to Kandla from an Indian Oil Depot. Narayan who works as a building contractor was later released on bail. Later Khimji Jesang resigned, as according to Congress(I) spokesmen, his relatives were "found to be taking advantage of his position."

Fracas: That was only the beginning. A more sensational incident hit the local headlines on August 29 when the police rounded up Mukesh Vanvi and Farooq Surti, the sons of Devjibhai Vanvi, the state minister for social welfare and Mohammad Surti, the state minister for transport, respectively. The two had got into a fracas at the Government College, Gandhinagar, after their faction lost out in the elections for posts in the college gymkhana club.

On August 28, Mukesh and Farooq tried to avenge their defeat. They drove into the college in two jeeps—one belonging to Surti, and the other said to be a part of the fleet of the Social Welfare Department. Getting out of the jeep, Mukesh is said to have pulled a gun on Santosh Chauhan, a student activist of the opposing faction. He also threatened that he would have Chauhan's father, who is a police inspector, transferred. Mukesh and Farooq accompanied by a handful of their supporters then went to the principal's office and attacked a group of students, including Dilip Modi, the leader of the rival faction, with cycle chains.

But if the pair had reckoned that they could get away with this because of their fathers' influence, they had miscalculated badly. The rumpus could not be hushed up. The incensed students got together and organised a boycott of classes. A student delegation also landed up on Solanki's doorstep demanding that the investigation

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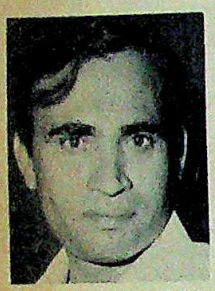
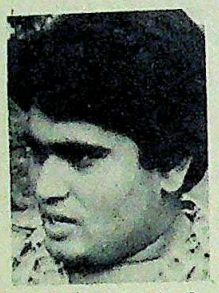
Jesang (left) and Surti: awkward position

Vanvi and son Mukesh: unsavoury episode

should not be suppressed. The Opposition also quickly got into the act. Said Bramkumar Bhatt, Janata Party leader: "Vanvi and Surti must resign if they respect public morality."

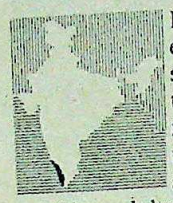
Said Home Minister Prabodh Raval: "This case will be investigated as any other. The very fact that they were arrested proves the point." He claimed that, "the police have been given a free hand." This, however, was not enough to staunch allegations that the police were soft-pedalling investigations. Ashok Bhatt, a Bharatiya Janata Party leader, points out that after several days the police had still not traced the revolver that Mukesh is said to have carried. Police officers also admitted unofficially that they had, "numerous requests from well-wishers of the ministers", that the two boys should not be arrested.

The most revealing part of the two incidents, however, was the way it brought the dissensions in the ruling party bubbling to the surface. Khimji Jesang angrily alleged that his son had been framed. Said Jesang: "My son was arrested only to malign me. This is the handiwork of the acting Gujarat Pradesh Congress Committee President Dr Mahipat Mehta. All he wants is a newspaper cutting of the arrest so that he can show it to Indiraji. If investigations prove my son guilty, I will resign immediately."

Whether the allegations against Mehta who was ousted last week as acting president of the Gujarat Pradesh Congress(I) Committee, were true or not there could be little doubt that Mehta must have been overjoyed to have more ammunition to snipe at Solanki with. But episodes like these can only further embarrass the Solanki Ministry, plagued as it already is by dissidence.—RAMESH MENON

KERALA

Licence To Kill



IT WAS an eerie coincidence. Soon after the residents of Vypeen Island, off the coast of Cochin, had flocked to the local theatre to see I.V. Sasi's *Eenada*, about people dying after drinking adulterated liquor, a similar tragedy struck at home. In the movie, a contractor, who paid protection money to a minister, sells illicit liquor to meet the high demand during a festival. The poisonous brew kills hundreds.

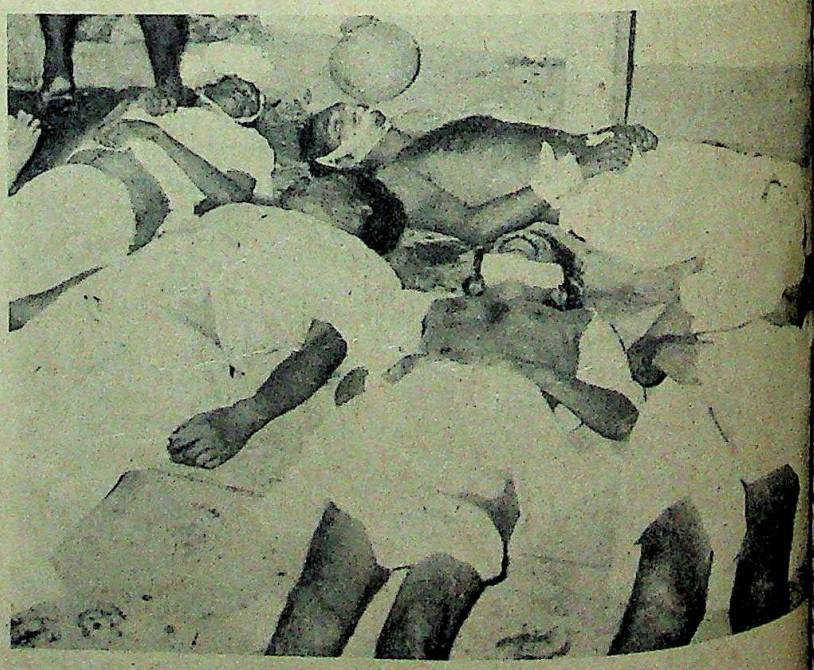
At Vypeen, the residents who celebrated Onam on September 1 went through much the same routine. After the day-long revelry they made a beeline to their neighbourhood licensed arrack shop in order to round off the day in a truly festive manner. But in a tragic twist, the day of celebration became a disaster with the death of 72 people and the blinding or injury of 50 others.

Rising Toll: By the time it was over, 3,000 people had been medically examined and over 700 had been hospitalised. Teams of doctors were rushed in to deal with the emergency. It was soon established that all the patients showed signs of methyl alcohol poisoning. Methyl alcohol, which had been mixed with the arrack, is highly poisonous and used only for industrial purposes. It is believed that many more people died at home and were cremated or buried without a post-mortem.

The stories of the victims are [illegible] rending. The case of C.P. John, a [illegible] particularly pathetic. His uncle George [illegible] had been drinking with him, was in [illegible] few hours after they came home. John [illegible] shed him to hospital, and though by this [illegible] he was himself showing the same symptoms [illegible] attended his uncle, claimed his body [illegible] him buried and only then admitted himself [illegible] into the hospital. John died a little [illegible] leaving behind his wife and two daughters [illegible] Sobbed his wife, Eliamma: "We have lost [illegible] everything. I and my two unmarried daughters should also have drunk that [illegible] brew."

Paulose, a waiter in a restaurant, complained of stomach pains to Cletus, his employer. Cletus developed the pains [illegible] while he was tending to Paulose. Soon [illegible] they were both dead. But the most tragic case was that of Binil Kumar, an 11-year-old schoolboy, who was fighting for his life in hospital. Kumar, who had gone out to celebrate with some college students, had drunk one small peg of the adulterated arrack. His friends had gone on to drink [illegible] and this saved their lives. Kumar who was rushed to hospital said: "I have promised Chief Minister K. Karunakaran [illegible] who visited us, that I won't touch [illegible] after this."

What marks this tragedy from [illegible] others which occur throughout the country is the fact that the arrack was supplied [illegible]



Victims of the Vypeen tragedy: killer brew

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...state Government through licensed ... And what makes it significant is that ...most prominent contractor in Vypeen is ...Augustine, state executive member of ...werful Kerala Congress(Joseph), close ...ate of Kerala's Revenue ...er P.J. Joseph and one of ...und-raisers of the party. ...oseph told INDIA TODAY: ...e that my party man is ...ed in it. Last year the ...tor involved in the ...r tragedy was a member ...Antony Congress and ...t even arrested." Jo- ...record, admittedly, is ...Soon after the tragedy, ...ine, along with K.K. ...n, M.K. Thampan and ...Vikhidas, who were in- ...were arrested. They have ...charged with culpable ...de and have been refused

Augustine:charged

Flourishing Business: The ...g unit on the island, as ...22 licensed shops and 15 ...ops, have been sealed. ...t that people died after ...g arrack from licensed ...has put a lot of business in the way ...illicit liquor trade. The illicit brewers, ...market their stuff with names like ...ola Virgin Fresh, are advertising their products with the slogan: 'Drink Kuruthola And Stay Alive'. The local Police Inspector P.K. Jose remarked: "The illicit liquor trade will flourish till the licensed shops reopen." P.K. Velayudhan, the MLA from this area said that people are going as far as Cochin to buy liquor. He added that the islanders would soon demand the reopening of the licensed shops.

In hindsight, the cause of this tragedy becomes obvious. Demand for the government-supplied arrack increased as the illicit liquor breweries on the neighbouring island, Gothuruthy, were raided days before Onam. Unable to meet the demand, the contractors had mixed methyl alcohol into the arrack to make it go further. The Minister for Excise, N. Srinivasan, who visited the site soon after, said the arrack had also been mixed with contaminated water instead of distilled water. To add to this, it was found that only two or three excise officers were in the excise range office in Narrakal, the largest village in Vypeen, on the crucial days after the raids. Said a perturbed Srinivasan frankly: "That the Excise Department officials in the area are directly or indirectly responsible for the incident cannot be denied."

Protest: The people of the 26 km densely populated island are, however, gunning for bigger fish. The island is full of black flags and screaming posters against Joseph and Augustine. Questions are also being asked as to why the liquor shops were not shut on the first of the month as is normal. The Government has been prompt in acting. A judicial inquiry commission has been announced and two top revenue officers have been suspended. The traditional Onam festivities were cancelled in Cochin and Trivandrum as a mark of sympathy for the victims of Vypeen. In keeping with the public mood, the Kerala's Minister for Home, Vayalar Ravi, said: "I saw to it that these death dealers were handcuffed and brought to the court much against the Supreme Court ruling against handcuffing."

Though Karunakaran has said, "Let us keep politics out of such human tragedies", it will be difficult to separate politics from the liquor business. Liquor accounts for a sizeable Rs 6,462 crore in the state's total earnings of Rs 441·6 crore and constitutes the most powerful lobby in the state. Said a senior politician: "The top political parties are financed by liquor barons." With odds stacked so heavily in their favour, it is doubtful if the Government will bring this powerful group to heel.

—SREEDHAR PILLAI

...UGGLING

...enient Treatment

FOR customs officers it was an old familiar tale. After a week of legal pyrotechnics the trial ended with a ...mper. Jacques Asselin a convicted ...g dealer was fined Rs 12,500 and ...ered to leave the country. His co- ...used, Sam Gurbux Biriyani who was ...o said to be linked with drug trafficking ...s let off scot free. They could hardly ...ve asked for better.

But even in his judgment, the ...ditional Chief Metropolitan Magis- ...te J.M. Malik made it clear that ...was not happy with the outcome of the ...l. He observed in his judgment that: ...is not out of place to mention that ...s which have outlived their utility ...ld be changed." He was referring to ...rule that the evidence of an accom- ...e without any other corroboration ...n be ignored by the court. Malik pointed out that an accomplices's evidence if proved to be true and reliable can carry considerable value. He added that the chief beneficiaries of this were the big bosses who worked behind the scenes.

Asselin and Biriyani were hauled up before the court after they were implicated by Roland Joseph Aubin, nicknamed the 'Golden Goose'. Aubin was caught smuggling heroin out of the country (INDIA TODAY, August 31). In his confession he named Asselin. His confession was the only evidence against Asselin.

Lax Laws: Asselin's conviction could hardly be claimed as a triumph for the prosecution. He had already pleaded guilty, fully aware of the fact that he would be let off lightly. It was the guilty plea which irked customs officers most. They say that it is an indication of the leniency of the anti-smuggling laws in the country. Asselin was also probably aware that the Government is keen to avoid jailing foreigners. The Tourism Ministry is said to have suggested that there are many dangers involved in jailing foreigners.

Government officials cite Turkey as an example of the dangers of handing out stiff sentences to smugglers. The poor conditions in Turkish prisons were played up in the movie *Midnight Express*, causing a furore in the US and Western Europe. Both the smugglers and law enforcement agents are aware of this attitude. Public prosecutors generally do not press for stiff sentences and the courts let off smugglers after declaring them *persona non grata*. The only punishment in the end is a few months in judicial custody.

Customs officials gripe that the Government's policy may be dictated by the needs of foreign relations but it does not help their job one bit. In fact India stands out as one of the few countries in the region where smugglers can be sure of lenient treatment. Other countries like Malaysia, Singapore, Turkey, Iran and Burma all prescribe either capital punishment, or stiff jail terms.

With such conditions prevailing in nearly all neighbouring countries, India's lax anti-smuggling laws act almost as a magnet for smugglers. And when Jacques Asselin flies out of this country a free man, it is hardly likely to discourage smugglers from coming to India.

—ASOKA RAINA

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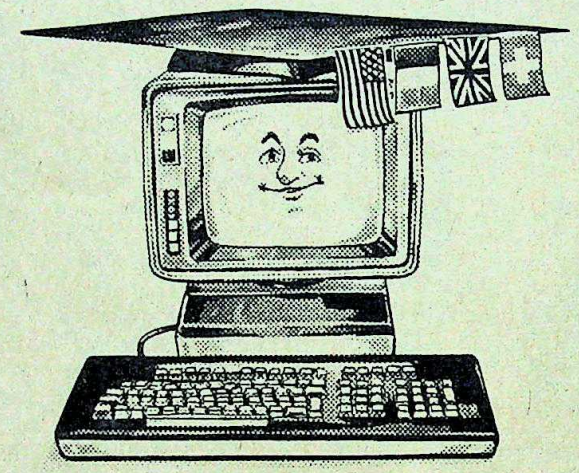

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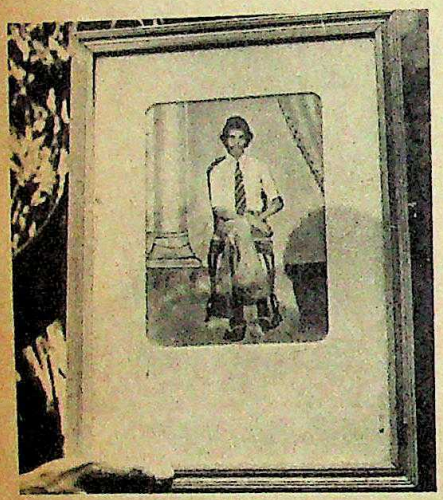
TAMIL NADU

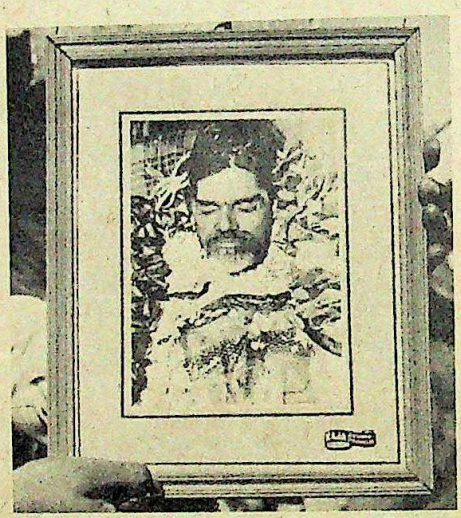
Tortured To Death

● Anthonyswamy, 24, was arrested by constables from the Alambur police station in May 1981. He was admitted to hospital on May 5 and died the same day of "head injuries". According to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) report, Anthonyswamy "died due to a major fracture in the skull and brain damage which could have been inflicted by the constables".

● Thanthoni, 38, a slum-dweller of Madras, was arrested by constables from the Otteri police station on October 1980 for a petty crime. He was released eight hours later—only to be admitted to Madras's Kilpauk Hospital where he died at 7.30 in the morning of October 20. The police called it a "natural death" but the post-mortem report reveals that he died of shock and injuries.

● Sada, 22, allegedly died in police cus on August 15, 1982. According to the p mortem certificate signed by Dr Ta Begum of Madras Government Hos Sada had 45 injuries on his body, incl multiple scratches near the navel and rasions on the right forearm and th shoulder. The police, however denied Sada died in custody.





Anthonyswamy, Thanthoni and Sada: unfortunate victims

IN TAMIL Nadu, villagers and slum-dwellers shrink in fear when someone knocks on their door late at night. The callers might be a small posse of constables, come to arrest an Anthonyswamy or a Thanthoni for some petty crime or the other. The arrested men know all too well what awaits them: a thorough beating before they are produced before the magistrate. If they are lucky, they will get away with multiple contusions and an aching body. But, over the last five years of the rule of M.G. Ramachandran, 190 Anthonyswamys, Thanthonis and Sadas have not been so lucky—following merciless and sadistic torture at the hands of Tamil Nadu's police, they have perished in jails and government hospitals. Once every 10 days for five years an undertrial has died in agony, a record that rivals the infamous Bhagalpur blindings, far away to the north in Bihar.

Battered spinal cords, crushed heads, mangled limbs and pulverised testicles litter the findings of the reports on the deaths (*see box*) and are painful witness to the fact that Tamil Nadu's 60,000-odd police force has become a law unto itself. In fact, the state notched up the largest ever toll of undertrial prisoners in any state over a 17-month period between J 1981 and May 1982, 61 undertrial pris lost their lives in the jails. The mayhe on irrespective of the party in pow the proportion of undertrials in the rising. In the second year Karunanidhi's rule, 33 trials died in jail, out of a tally of 82 deaths in j MGR's time, the total 331 and of these more per cent are undertrials.

These disquieting would not have seen th of day but for questions by Harkishan Singh Su Marxist member of the Sabha, in the meeting Parliamentary Committee of the Union Ministry in May and J year. The state Gov supplied the number but, significantly, kep about the cause. How cause is easily inferred fact that most stories lar: young men with

PICS BY RADHAKRISHNAN

Madras Central Prison: rising toll

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CASE STUDY

Painful Progress

A STUDY of the painful progress of two victims, Paramasivam and Gajendran, is shockingly revealing of police excesses in Tamil Nadu. Paramasivam,20, was the son of a horse cart driver in tiny Indira Gandhi Nagar—50 houses—in Chengalpattu district, 75 km from Madras. The unemployed youth's journey to death began, ironically, on Independence Day, 1980, when Chengalpattu police arrested him at the railway station while he was "moving under suspicious circumstances".

Paramasivam was allegedly beaten up by his captors and then produced before the sub-divisional magistrate who remanded him to judicial custody. He languished in Chengalpattu sub-jail till August 28, 1980; he was later transferred to Madras Central Jail where he died on September 22, 1980. According to his stepmother Sushila, his body was not handed over to his family, and was "disposed of" by the state.

The jail officials termed the death "natural", but investigations in Delhi and Tamil Nadu reveal that the unfortunate young man was subjected to inhuman treatment right from his arrest. In fact, he was moved to the Madras jail after he complained of severe pains all over his body as a result of his wounds.

That Paramasivam was battered by the police is confirmed by the post-mortem certificate No 1080/80, dated September 23, 1980 which says that "he died of shock due to vagal inhibition—following injury to testicles on both sides". (The vagus is an important nerve from the heart to the brain;vagal inhibition means that its free functioning is seriously impaired). The certificate, signed by Dr K. Janaki, additional professor, Department of Forensic Medicine, lists a number of "healing abrasions" on the right arm and elbow, the right hip, the buttocks, and a "healing punctured wound over abdomen".

Unnatural Death: After receiving the viscera report, Janaki reconfirmed the cause of death on December 15, 1980. Despite the fact that both the medical report and the evidence produced before the inquesting officer—M. Shanmugham, additional district collector—proved beyond doubt that Paramasivam did not die of natural causes, as police and jail officials said, no attempt was made then to identify the people responsible for his death.

Six months after Paramasivam died, the state Home Department decided to make its move because the inquest report had not mentioned the cause of death. R. Kiribaharan, joint secretary to the state Government, wrote in his letter of March 21, 1981 to the collector, Madras: "The medical evidence discloses that Thiru Paramasivam died of shock due to vagal inhibition following injuries to testicles on both sides. The post-mortem certificate mentions several injuries. The enquiry officer has failed to examine the doctor who conducted the post-mortem report examinations. I am, therefore, directed to request you to take suitable action against the enquiry officer in the lapses mentioned above."

Shanmugham was not available for comment, but almost two years after Paramasivam died, he at last sent his final report to the Home Department in which he recommended a further probe into the death. The process started all over again in July this year when the Home Department directed the CID to take a fresh look at the case.

Meanwhile, the Prison Department, obeying another directive, moved against the prison's staff. Tamil Nadu Inspector-General of Prisons R.L. Handa, in his order dated June 19, 1982, suspended P. Jayaraj, jailor at the Madras prison, and S. Salvaraj, head warder. Jayaraj had been prison jailor from July 20, 1979 to May 15, 1981—the period in which Paramasivam's death took place.

Badly Mauled: The story of Gajendran, 24, is a sickening parallel of Paramasivam's. He was also an unemployed youth, one of three sons of 70-year-old Kannan of Ambethu, 30 km from Madras. He was arrested by the police on November 17, 1981 and charged with theft. He became remand prisoner No. 14874 at the Madras Central Jail on November 19, 1981—he already had serious injuries on his body.

Gajendran: sickening story

Two days later, on November 21, he complained of severe pains and was admitted to the Madras general hospital. This was when, according to Kannan, he first came to know that his son had been arrested.

In the hospital, Gajendran was under the care of Professor Venkatraman. Official sources say that he told doctors that the police had caused a wound to the right scrotum. After being treated for over a week, Gajendran was again sent to jail where he died on January 23, 1982. In Gajendran's case as in Paramasivam's, jail officials and the police have convinced the state Government that he died of "natural causes".

Investigations tell a completely different story—that Gajendran died of injuries inflicted by the police. Says Kannan: "When I saw my son in the hospital he had wounds on every part of his body and was unable to move. He told me that he was beaten with lathis and not allowed to drink water." The dead body was handed over to Gajendran's relatives only after his elder brother signed a statement which said that there was no foul play involved in the death. Said the brother, K. Sundhramurthy: "It was an emotional dilemma. If I had not signed the statement, they would not have given me my brother's body. I had to say that there were no injuries on his body."

The post-mortem, however, proved beyond doubt that Gajendran died as a result of bodily violence. Dr Gopalakrishna Reddy, MP and assistant professor of forensic medicine conducted the post-mortem and his certificate No. 112/82, dated January 23, 1982, stated that Gajendran had died of "faecal fistula with septicaemia (infection due to an intestinal ulcer). The report also said that the right testicle had been removed and that "pus is seen over the partly healed wound", the right side of the large intestine was sticking to the peritoneal sac and "pus is seen below the liver", and the spleen and the kidneys were "congested".

No jail or police official is available for comment. The additional collector of Madras is conducting an enquiry; so far, no report has been sent to either the Home Department or the jail officials. It is likely that, officially, the silence of death will envelop Gajendran's end as it has so many others. —PRABHU CHAWLA

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of serious ailments are picked up by the police, are admitted to hospital within a few days or weeks of their arrest and die there. Between January 1981 and March 1982 in a 15-month period, 52 undertrials died in Tamil Nadu's prisons: six died within a week of being remanded to judicial custody, 24 within four weeks and 10 within 10 weeks.

Accusing Facts: Roshan Lal Handa, inspector general of prisons (IGP), Tamil Nadu, admits: "The number is definitely on the high side and the state Government is seriously concerned. We ourselves want to study the causes detachedly. But I can assure you that there is no torture by our staff, and no negligence." The facts accuse otherwise. Of the 52 deaths in 1981–82, as many as 28 were under 40 years of age. Of these 28, over a dozen were under 30. Their comparative youth apart, all complained of severe pains and injuries inflicted by the police, and all died of infection following the injuries. Says a senior doctor of Madras Medical College: "These deaths are most likely the results of serious physical abrasions caused by police beatings."

Suspiciously, convicts live longer than undertrials in Tamil Nadu jails. In 1981, 46 undertrials died as against 21 convicts. Of the 21, 15 were in jail from two to 10 years each and only two died within three months of arriving in jail, which compares very favourably with the short lives of undertrials when they get into the hands of the law. Says an undertrial who was released recently: "Why do only undertrials die so quickly after their arrest? If natural factors are responsible for their deaths then the percentage of convicts should also be high. It is clear that undertrials are being sent to jail in semi-dead condition."

High Toll: The Union Home Ministry is alarmed over the increasing number of undertrial deaths—from 20 in 1978 to 46 in 1981, with convict deaths falling from 34

POLICE BRUTALITY

Heavy Handed Justice

POLICE brutality in Tamil Nadu has claimed the lives of 190 undertrials in the last five years. The following tells the typical stories of 10 such undertrials, from the moment the heavy hand of the law fell on their shoulder until the time when they died in its clutches.

■ Radhakrishnan, 23, was taken into custody by the Madurai police under Section 41 (2), CrPC—"moving under suspicious circumstances"—and was remanded to judicial custody on December 6, 1980; Section 41 provides for the arrest of any person without an arrest warrant from a magistrate. Radhakrishnan was sent to Madurai Central Jail the same day. In January 1981, he was transferred to the government hospital complaining of acute illness and he died there on January 17, 1981.

The sturdy Radhakrishnan had no record of major illness. According to Home Department sources he was badly beaten up by the police before he was produced before the magistrate. While in jail, Radhakrishnan had sent series of memoranda to sundry authorities listing police atrocities, but none of his pleas received a response. The Madurai collector's office is conducting an enquiry into his death.

■ Nagarajan, 21, was arrested by the Coimbatore police in February 1981, "moving under suspicious circumstances". His explanation for his movements late at night did not convince the police and he was thoroughly beaten up before being produced before the magistrate on February 25, 1981. Nagarajan was sent to Coimbatore's Central Jail where he died two days later on February 27, 1981.

Interestingly, Nagarajan was transferred to the jail hospital soon after his admission to the jail: according to jail officials he complained of severe pains in his body. The Madurai collector was asked to depute one of his officials to conduct an inquest. The Home Department and the jail officials have received the report but no action has been taken.

■ Murugesan, 28, was picked up by police from the Ariyalur police station in Tiruchirapalli district on February 16, 1981, under Section 379 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). The magistrate remanded him to judicial custody and he was lodged in Ariyalur sub-jail on February 17, 1981. He was later sent to Trichy government hospital for a medical check-up, because he was, in the words of jail officials, "seriously sick". He died there on March 31, 1981.

Murugesan's relatives wrote to the state Government that he had died of torture by the local police and jail staff; no action was taken. The district collector's office, however, smelt a rat and started an enquiry. Over a dozen witnesses have been questioned, including doctors, jail staff and policemen, but the findings have not been submitted to the Government. According to sources, the preliminary report did not accept the police's claim that Murugesan died a natural death; even the post-mortem conducted by the government hospital had pointed out injuries on Murugesan's body.

■ Balakrishnan, 32, was hauled in by the Vellore district police under the Tamil Nadu Prohibition Act on July 13, 1981. According to his relatives, he was illegally held by the police in the station before being produced before the magistrate who sent him to the Vellore central prison. The relatives also alleged that Balakrishnan was arrested because he refused to collect money for the police from the illicit bootleggers. The well-built undertrial, of sound health according to jail records, died on July 23, 1981—only 10 days after being arrested.

Balakrishnan was sent to the government hospital, Vellore, when he fell seriously ill due to the infection caused by his wounds. He died soon after and the Vellore collector's office was directed to investigate. The report is still confidential but INDIA TODAY has learnt that the inquest officer found evidence of death not being natural. The state Home Department is looking into the matter and some arrests and suspensions are likely to be made soon.

■ Balan, 27, of Tiruchirapalli district was arrested by the Trichy police under Section 41 (2), CrPC, on July 12, 1981. At the end of July Balan was to be produced before a magistrate because the rules say that an undertrial has to appear in court every 14 days until he is bailed out. But Balan's relatives could not arrange bail as they did not know where he was. In fact, after being admitted to Trichy sub-jail, a very ill Balan was taken to the Trichy general hospital where he died on August 5, 1981, less than three weeks after he went to jail.

The fact that Balan had been taken ill only a week after his arrest proves that something was very wrong. The state Government is sitting on the preliminary report of the inquest officer which had reportedly said that the police explanation for the death was doubtful. A senior official of the Trichy collector's office was directed to conduct an enquiry but even one year after Balan's death, the Home Department has not received the report.

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21 in 1981—asked the state Government an explanation. The state Government ...used itself by saying that the deaths ...ibuted to the growing prison popula... However, this argument collapses when ...ates are taken into account. Uttar ... with 27,206 prisoners tops the list ...y 11 undertrials died in custody ... January 1981 and March 1982. ...r, Maharashtra had 14,320 prisoners ...toll there was only 10. Tamil Nadu ...526 prisoners had 52 deaths. A ...fficial of the Home Ministry says ... "The state Government has not ...e to explain the causes of such a large number of deaths in Tamil Nadu."

Besides the prisoners who have allegedly been tortured and beaten to death, there are quite a few who have died of other causes. Over the last three years, over a dozen prisoners have been killed by their fellows in jail, or have consumed poisonous liquids, or succumbed to their injuries after being attacked by jail staff. Manichem, an undertrial in Trichy Central Prison, allegedly committed suicide two months after he came to the prison by drinking diluted phenyl. Two other prisoners, Ayyare at the Sirkali sub-jail and Sushila, an undertrial at the Dadapet sub-jail, died of swift paralytic attacks—Ayyare on August 19, 1980, barely a week after admission, and Sushila on August 23, 1980, the very day she had come to the jail.

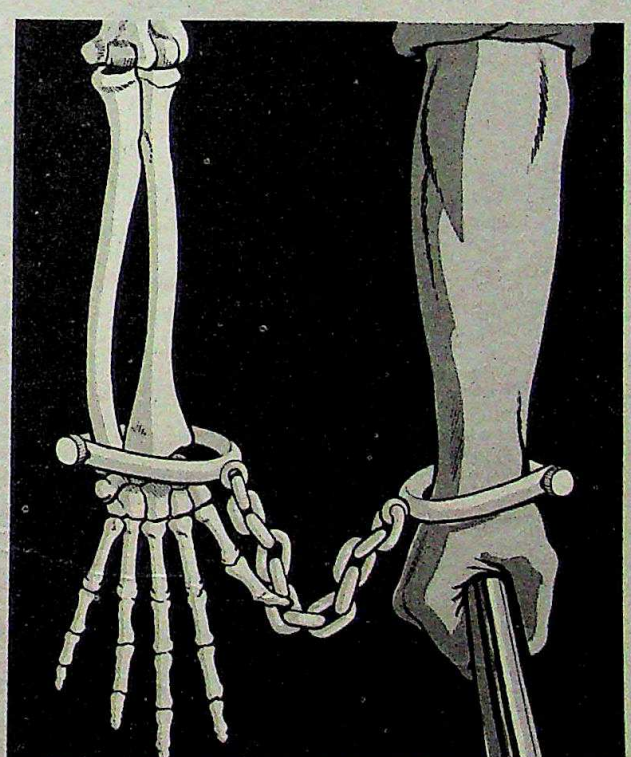
THE LARGE majority of those who died in custody were poor and without the necessary connections, so that the police were, in all cases, able to get away with it. As the relatives were ignorant of even the simplest rules, they didn't think to ask for the all-important post-mortem report. The police were able to get written statements from them saying that the death was natural and that they didn't

...Subramani, 20, of South Arcot dis... was unemployed and the police had ...ared him an "undesirable" element. ...major criminal cases were pending ...inst him. The Chengan police in the ...rict arrested him under Section 379, ...C on September 3, 1981. Produced ...re the magistrate on September 9, ...ramani was sent to the Chengan ...-jail, then managed by the ...enue Department with the ...p of the local police. Subra... ...ni fell ill, was admitted to the ...l hospital where he died on ...tember 14—only 11 days ...r his arrest.

According to state govern... ...t sources, Subramani was ...ously injured before going ...ail, but the Government has ...said the final word on this ...er. The personal assistant of ...South Arcot district collec... ...conducted an enquiry but ...pite half-a-dozen hearings, ...cause of Subramani's death ...not been established. Jail ...ials have predictably dec... ...d that he died a natural ...th.

...Babu, 22, of Vellore dis... ...and unemployed, was pick... ...p by the police under Sec... ...41 (1), CrPC on October ...981 and was sent to Vellore ...ral prison on October 3. His ...ives say that he wrote at ...four letters to various ...orities detailing the inhuman treat... ...meted out to him by the police ...no action was taken. Even the jail ...rds show that he had serious injuries ...admitted. Babu came to the general ...ital and died there on October 16— ...his death was declared natural by ...emen and jail staff.

However, the inquest officer did accept this and, for the last nine months, has listened to over a dozen witnesses. INDIA TODAY has learnt that a final report is likely to be sent to the Home Department. Meanwhile, the state's inspector general of prisons has also begun investigating the death of a man who had no record of ill-health. A senior jail official admits that Babu's death is "baffling because he was too young to be suffering from any disease".



■ Kanagaraj, 21, was arrested by the Coimbatore police under Section 41 (2), CrPC, on December 12, 1981 while allegedly "moving under suspicious circumstances". Sent to Coimbatore Central Jail on December 13, he was allegedly killed by another prisoner on December 15.

Even eight months after Kanagaraj's death, none of the jail staff has been arrested for permitting one prisoner to fatally injure another. The collector's personal assistant was directed to conduct an enquiry but the state Government is still to receive the final report.

■ Krishnamurthy, 25, a student of Coimbatore, was considered a bad character by the local police and a 'nuisance' for the local people. He was arrested in December 1981 under Section 379, IPC, and sent to Coimbatore central prison on December 11, 1981. When he complained of severe pains in his head and other parts of the body, he was admitted to the Vellore general hospital where he died on December 19—nine days after his arrest.

The jail authorities termed the death natural, but the state CID has still not accepted this. The CID came into the picture when the Coimbatore collector's office intimated to the state Government that it was not a clear case of natural death.

■ Kalian, 33, was arrested by the Trichy police under the Tamil Nadu Prohibition Act on January 4, 1982 and sent to Trichy special sub-jail on January 5. Kalian was removed to the general hospital two days later suffering from "acute illness". He died a few days later.

Kalian was in police custody for two days, says a complaint to the chief minister, because he did not collect money from liquor peddlers for the police. Only later was a case registered and when he came to hospital, according to the medical report, he had many injuries. The post-mortem report has been kept secret. The state Home Department is waiting for the final inquest report. —PRABHU CHAWLA

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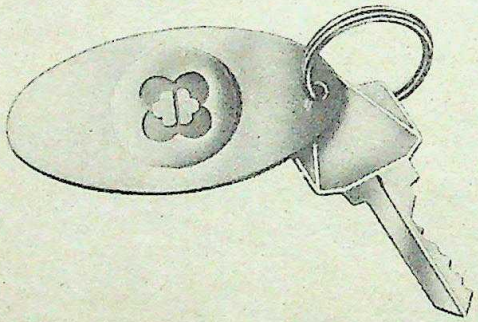

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DEATHS BEHIND BARS

Chart by B.K. Sharma

	CONVICTS	REMAND / UNDERTRIALS	TOTAL
1970	49	33	82
1971	33	16	49
1972	28	16	44
1973	35	32	67
1974	37	36	73
1975	41	53	94
1976	40	33	73
1977	41	27	68
1978	34	20	54
1979	31	48	79
1980	24	41	65
1981	21	46	67
1982 upto July 31'82	9	9	18

MGR (left) and Handa: presiding over purgatory

ly foul play.
se who dared to ques-
police version were per-
ot to do so. Said Sewa,
er of Sada who died in
ustody on August 15,
was mercilessly beaten
olice and my legs were
roken when I refused
e statement. My young
was also arrested by
ce. Ultimately, I sur-
and put my signature
ever statement they
" Sewa was denied the
tem report.

atives of many dead
charge that the arrests
de because the young
picked up a fight with
police. In fact, a
f young unemployed
refused to collect
m bootleggers for the
ice were hauled in
e convenient Tamil
hibition Act, or under
more convenient Sec-
f the Criminal Proce-
e (CrPC) which autho-
police to arrest any
moving under suspi-
umstances". As many
rsons who died mys-
in custody were arrest-
these laws. Ironically,
n were from the back-
mmunities which are
bone of AIADMK and
rt.

ous Officers: Signifi-
e largest number of
out of 52 in the 15-
eriod, took place in
urai Central Prison
by the Coimbatore
rison where nine undertrials lost
. Both these districts are hotbeds
e activity; senior police and jail
ave come under attack from leftists
"anti-Naxalite" attitude. One such
ic officer is Walter Isaac Dewa-
the deputy inspector general of
ellore range), who has the
of causing great damage to the
movement in the four districts
control.

arly, Perumal Thevar, one of the
uperintendents in Tamil Nadu, is
readed jail chief—he is now under
. During his stewardship of
Central Prison, four undertrials
was transferred to Madurai in
1980. Between September 1980
1982, when he was suspended, as
many as 14 undertrials lost their lives.

A large number of deaths, 19 out of the 52, took place in sub-jails which are not in the Prison Department's control. Only eight central prisons and 26 sub-jails are run by the Prison Department and the 26 sub-jails were taken over only in October 1981; earlier, they were run by the Revenue Department which depended on the local police. As the police both made the arrests and held the accused in custody, they could cover up any maltreatment by manipulating reports. The overcrowding in the sub-jails also leads to neglect: for example, Poonamallee sub-jail held 225 prisoners on August 28, 1982 as against its capacity of 52; Chengapatti sub-jail held 151 prisoners although its capacity is only 80.

Corruption in jails is rampant, and a prisoner can get anything inside if he pays, even weapons which are frequently used to attack prisoners. The three-member Jail Reforms Commission, headed by R.L. Narasimhan, a retired Indian Civil Service official and a former Patna High Court chief justice, pointed this out in its report: "It will be quite unrealistic and somewhat ostrich-like to completely ignore the wide prevalence of corruption amongst the prison officials. As stated by an ex-prisoner to the chairman, there is no article which a prisoner cannot obtain inside the prison and there is no amenity which he cannot enjoy if he is willing to pay for the same."

Growing Furore: When IGP Handa paid a surprise visit to the Madras Central Prison on September 8, 1980, a respectable collection of forbidden articles was made including 900 gm of ganja, 23 knives, seven hacksaw blades and seven ovens. Soon after the raid, Handa ordered an enquiry and jail superintendent Thevar was suspended.

The growing furore caused by the large number of deaths has at last got to MGR's ears. Recently, he directed jail officials to send him a list of all ailing undertrials and convicts along with their 'case histories'. He also asked them to provide a sealed complaint box inside each jail—the box will be opened only by the IGP. Finally, MGR asked the district collectors to speed up the inquests into the deaths—the state Home Ministry has received the collector's report in only 26 cases.

MGR has asked the collectors to be fearless and fair in their investigation. However, the inquiring officers are themselves daunted by the reputation of the police. Admitted one: "What can I do if the witnesses change their statement every time they appear before me? Some of them don't even turn up and disappear from their homes because of the presence of the police." It seems that the police cannot be tamed by the politicians, and the poorer citizens of Tamil Nadu will continue to cringe in fear and anticipate the worst every time the heavy knuckles of the law knock on their doors.

—PRABHU CHAWLA in Madras

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ORISSA FLOODS

Cycle Of Sorrow

Flood victims on a narrow strip of land: waiting for help

IT WAS the same tragic tale of destruction, death and misery as the annual floods once again rolled relentlessly across the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa, turning dry land into huge expanses of water where human beings and cattle struggled for food and survival. The hardest hit of all the states was Orissa where, till last week, the air-dropping of food for hundreds of marooned villagers was continuing. To document the ordeal of the state, INDIA TODAY *Correspondent* FARZAND AHMED *and Photographer* BHAWAN SINGH *toured the ravaged areas by boat and helicopter. Their report:*

MAHUKHANDA a large village of 5 households some km from Cuttack. At midnig on August 30, as the villag were trying to sleep, torment by thoughts of what the inc sant rain was doing to th crops, they were jerked wi awake by terrifying sounds: roar of water and the cr of human beings and cat Netranand Jena, a hefty you man, recalled that before villagers had realised what happening the waters had s everything away. By the the exhausted survivors reach the safety of a nearby bu their houses had dissolved i the hungry water.

Five days after the delu two army boats with 100 k *chuda* (beaten rice) and jagg struggled through the slush provide relief to the starv villagers. Countless hands ched out for the grain. stock vanished in no time but many hands remai empty. As the boats tu away an old lady cried ou Oriya: "Why did you without more food?" The tehsildar, who was guidin army boats, laughed at the lady, took out some dry f from his pocket and chewe

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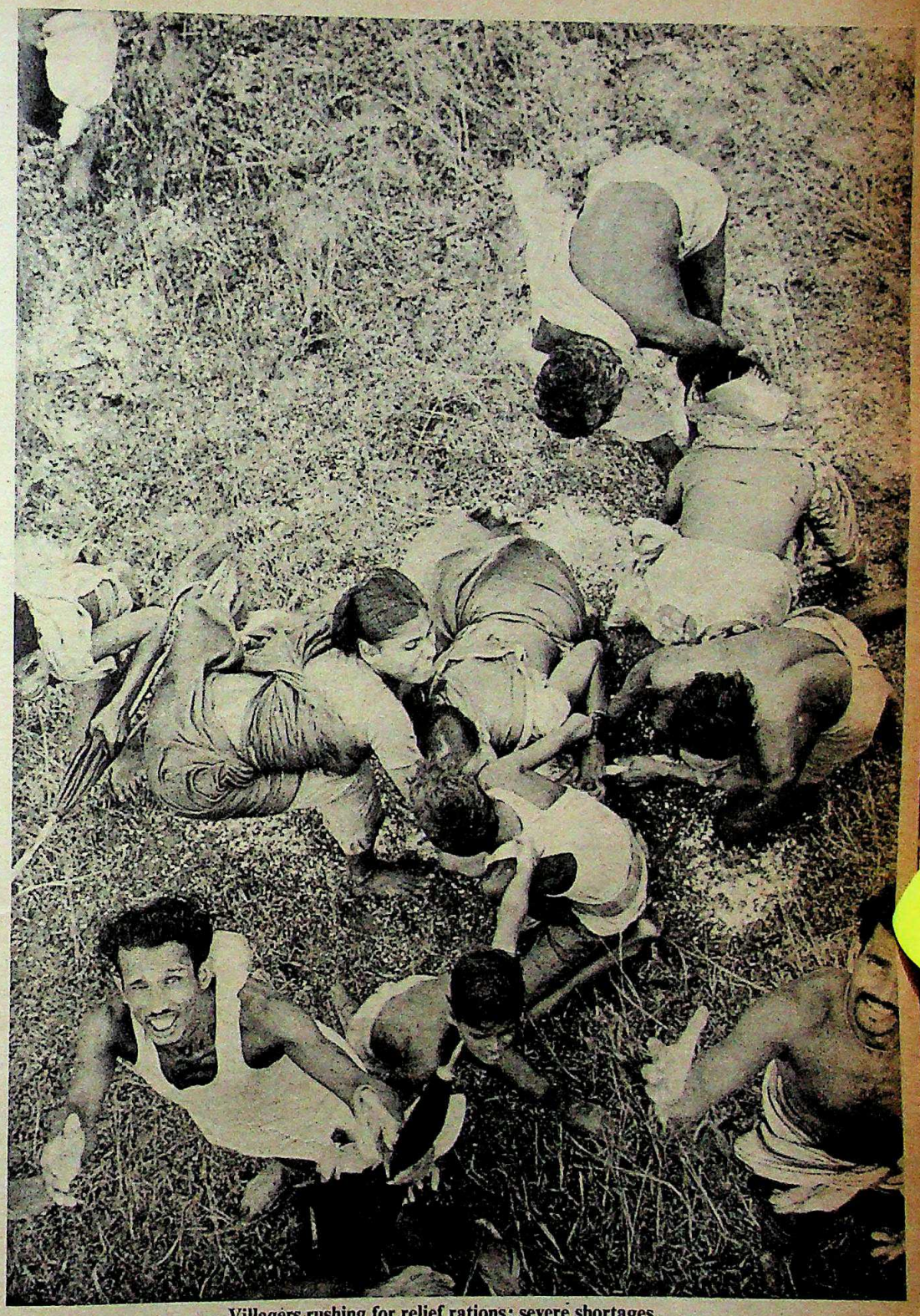
rissa today is a land of
drowned in the floods
ravaged its villages and
s August 31. The sorrow
ounded by the indiffe-
the bureaucracy—typi-
the tehsildar's gesture.
handa is only one of
ds of villages spread
,000 sq km and eight of
te's 13 districts, which
een submerged by the
31 deluge, the worst in
ars, according to official
es. Unprecedented rain-
the downstream catch-
the river Mahanadi be-
Hirakud dam on Aug-
and 30 caused a peak
15.8 lakh cusecs to pass
the Mahanadi causing
e destruction in Sam-
Bolangir, Kalahandi,
i, Dhenkanal, Cuttack
districts, engulfing an
d 10 million people.
e preliminary govern-
port on the flood: "The
de of the flood was
ious in nature than any
cried ou ded memory."

ther **Warning:** Irriga-
epartment experts say
current ordeal was not
unheralded. In fact,
as a depression over the
engal on August 27 and
earlier Sambalpur had
ced over 500 mm of
. As a result the region
ded. On August 27, the
ad of the Mahanadi
ed 1.7 lakh cusecs and
her office relayed warn-
likely rain in the lower
nt areas of Hirakud.
said that the Govern-
hich had just prepared
report on the drought
, did not respond to
ning. Barely three days
August 30, the Irriga-
epartment got really
Chief Minister Janaki
Patnaik called a news
ce in panic to alert the

as too late. By the time
s got into print, most of the villages
ady been washed away. Soon, the
ent reported that all river embank-
ems had burst under flood pres-
admitted that altogether 184 brea-
occurred of which 43 were in
district, followed by 45 in Puri,



Villagers rushing for relief rations: severe shortages

seven in Bolangir and two in Ganjam districts. With this admission, the Government, especially its Works Department, exposed itself to the charge of having allowed the embankments to weaken. Said an engineer: "The embankments were really in bad shape and were hardly in a position to hold a 9 lakh cusecs discharge."

Sources point out that after the 1980 floods, when the discharge was 12 lakh cusecs, a team of experts from the Centre had suggested that the embankments should be strengthened to face at least 13 lakh cusecs but nothing was done. No wonder, then, that

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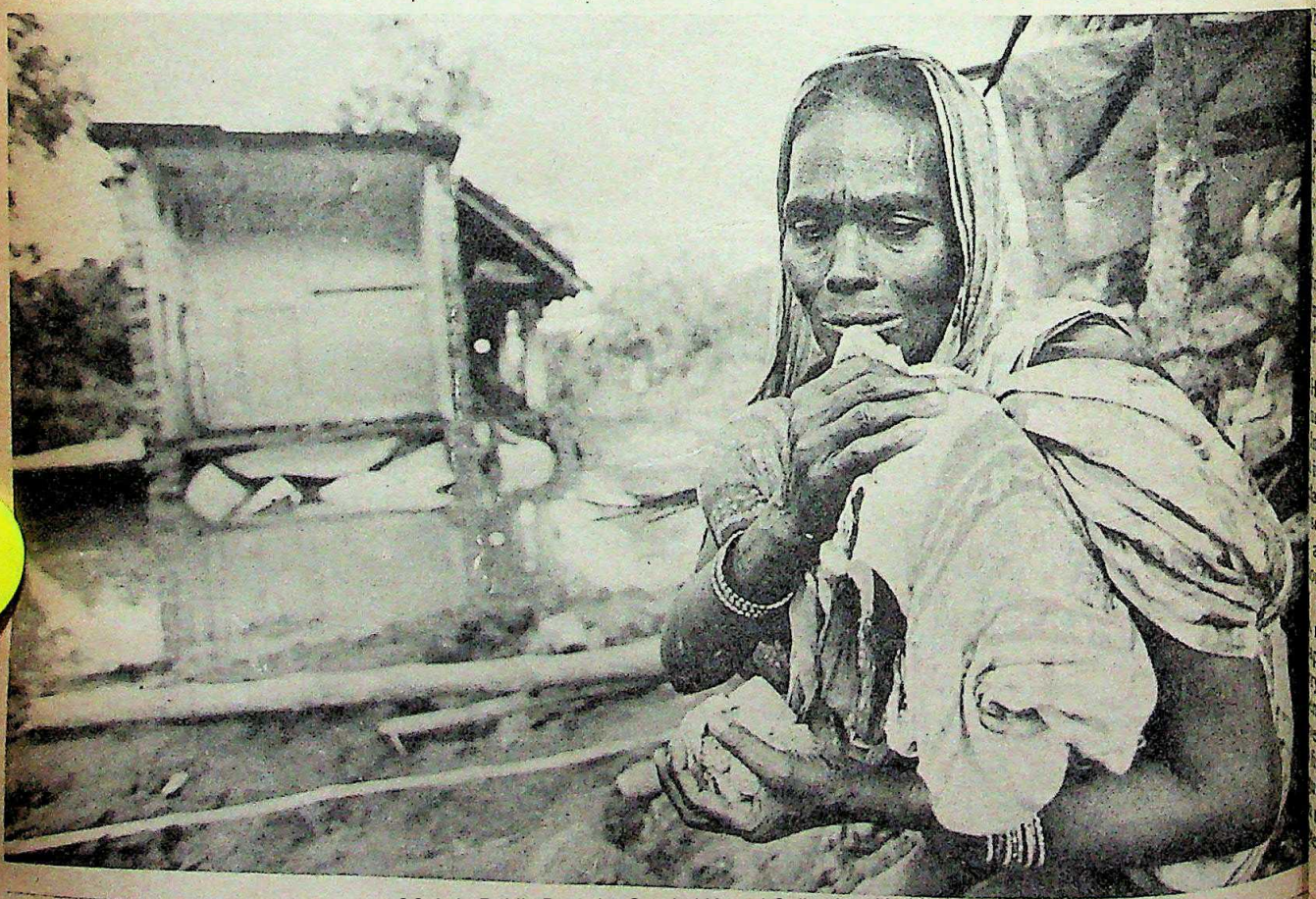
A house battered by the floods (above) and a grief-stricken survivor: tragic aftermath



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rious floods wrought havoc this time. official: "Imagine the situation now pare it with the 1980 floods which med 82 lives and 20,000 houses were away, besides an equal number of damaged."

ere Damage: The preliminary report ear's floods thus summed them up: damages have been caused to life perty on account of the floods in 00 blocks in eight districts with a son of more than 10 million and an mate area of 90,000 sq km. Of these , Bolangir, Dhenkanal, Phulzai, adi and Sambalpur have never expe- such severe floods in the past." The agnitude of the floods, however, ot be assessed since all lines of nication had been totally disrupted. te capital, Bhubaneswar, remained om all sides. The Government fears loss of human life this time would be ecause hundreds of villages had just ared from the face of the earth. So Government has confirmed that 57 were killed and that another 42 are Orissa Finance Minister Raghu- atnaik says: "Orissa is lost. The n will be worse when the water What the Government would have the next three plan periods had just shed away and at least Rs 2,000 crore eeded to repair the damage."

at was more tragic, according to ath Patnaik, was that the districts of Puri, Balasore, Dhenkanal and ar were severely hit by a cyclone a few ago and the loss was estimated to be s 300 crore. The Centre had just Rs 56 crore for cyclone relief. In fact, as a disastrous cycle of drought, and flood. Official sources recall that days before the floods came, the ment sent a report to the Centre g the drought and flashed an SOS grains as it had only 10,000 tonnes.

HE COMING days will be critical nless the Centre helps in a big way. nformed sources said that even the is critical as grain stocks have fallen. aim that the relief is a cruel hoax. ources confirmed the allegations. army officials manning the relief n told INDIA TODAY that they were neither cooperation from state nor sufficient food for distribution. ptain Sanjiv Vashistha: "Our boats y a load of 8,000 kg but instead we hardly 300 kg. What can we do? er, civil officials keep us waiting for ve hours every day before they turn ide our boats."

the other hand, the air force with six rs and 70 pilots speaks of excellent coordination. Until September 7, it had made 247 sorties, dropped over 500 tonnes of commodities to the people in inaccessible places since August 31. Said air force task force commander M.M. Lal: "Sometimes there is underloading and there are some inherent problems with the state bureaucracy but everything has been streamlined as the chief minister himself is supervising the whole operation."

Hungry Mobs: But as the water level started dropping, official bungling in distribution of relief supplies came to the surface. In many areas people turned violent, attacked the relief party and tried to snatch away relief supplies. On September 5, a mob of hungry people gheraoed the officials carrying relief materials and threw them into the flood water near Konark at Kekatpur. In another incident Agriculture Minister

Homeless villagers: grim scenario

Basudev Mahapatra was mobbed and manhandled in Borikena area. Similar incidents have been reported from Banki, Adaspur, Kanthapara, Narendrapur and Raghunathpur. Police have confirmed 15 such cases of rioting so far. Chief Minister Patnaik said: "This is natural since people are hungry."

The complaints of bungling and discrimination in distribution of relief supplies were heard just about everywhere. In Deoli village close to Mahukhanda, the residents alleged that whatever relief had reached them had been grabbed by upper caste people and that the Harijans had been left to starve. Two Harijans, Makua and Gopalia who swam to Poigari village complained that for six days they had had nothing to eat. Finally, some army jawans gave them *chuda* and jaggery. Said Ranjit Singh a tehsildar: "Such reports are coming in from other villages also."

Jai Bahera, a 60-year-old villager with five daughters complained that he was denied relief because he could not get to the relief party on the road. "We are fated to starve," he added. Most people in the interior alleged it was mostly Congress(I) musclemen who had snatched the supplies. Purncharan Maharana of Bhanpur village, who first saw the flood waters rushing into his village, lamented that some officials came only three days afterwards and only a few got food for a day. The lack of drinking water, too, was being sorely felt. The officials themselves seem resigned to it all. Special Relief Commissioner K.S. Chandrasekharan said: "Food riots are a natural phenomenon. People starving for four to five days just go wild when someone comes with food."

The chief minister denied that there was any bungling or scarcity and said that barring a few panchayats in inaccessible areas relief had reached everywhere. Said he: "We faced an impossible situation. But we did whatever was possible. We are getting all help and we are able to cope with the situation." But at a meeting with opposition leaders, former chief minister Nandini Satpathy told him bluntly that the Government had failed in its handling of the crisis. She said: "The Government made no preparations and now when hungry people are demanding food police are used to silence them. Even voluntary agencies are not being encouraged to help the needy. The chief minister cannot do it alone."

People also complained about the pick and choose policy of the Government in distributing relief supplies. According to Lok Dal leader Damodar Rout, people in his constituency in Cuttack were denied relief for seven days. Biju Patnaik's constituents also reportedly suffered the same fate. Opposition leaders allege that relief distribution had so far been confined to Puri and Cuttack districts, and people in other flood-hit districts came off second-best. The authorities predictably deny this. Surprisingly, the chief minister said that the Government would distribute free relief for only a week. Finance Minister Patnaik, asserted that the people must be fed until the next crop.

In this welter of accusation and denial, the real tragedy in Orissa is far from over. The authorities, however, fear the wrath of the people when the time comes for the reckoning after the deluge. The 1980 floods brought a violent agitation in their wake, and people fear that 1982, too, will see a similar outbreak of angry violence—bigger and more widespread, just as the floods this year were more ruthless in their fury.

—FARZAND AHMED in Bhubaneswar

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THE GOVERNMENT

The Cabinet Carousel

IT WAS like a convoluted crime plot ending without identifying the murderer. It was a tale without a dénouement, an exercise without a goal, a gesture without a motion. The seventh convulsion in Mrs Gandhi's Council of Ministers which last fortnight led to an increase in its strength to 61 from 55, stared the millions of its bemused spectators in the face as just another barren game politicians play, outwardly to reassure themselves but in effect laying bare their own innate weaknesses and their native sense of insecurity.

The reshuffle of September 2, involving seven of her 18 Cabinet colleagues, downgrading three crucial departments, hiring eight new hands, and firing two, came in the wake of months of nail-chewing speculation. Partymen claiming inside knowledge first prophesied changes around the third week of August, then pushed it forward to the last week. But Mrs Gandhi herself added her characteristic twist to the proceedings when, three days before the reshuffle, she remarked: "Talk of a reshuffle has become a permanent joke." She was right, though in a way which she had not perhaps intended.

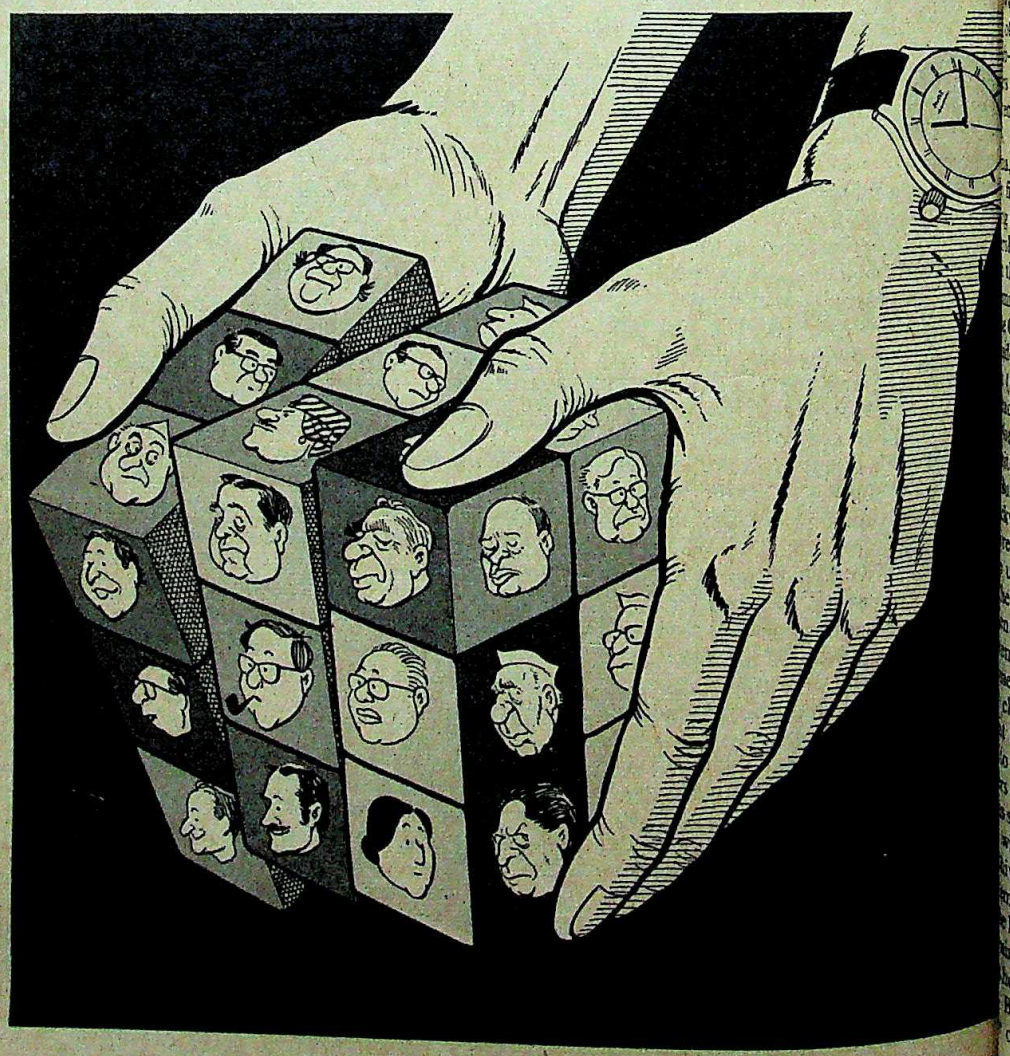
The first thing that struck flustered observers was its all-embracing purposelessness. In a democratic set-up, periodic stirring up of the Cabinet serves the three-fold purpose of winnowing out the chaff, infusion of new blood, and keeping ministers in trim. Oddly enough, none of these purposes were served. Said an affected minister sardonically: "It's the classic prescription of the pharmacist: shake the bottle before use, but it's the same mixture."

After the portfolio switches, 27 of Mrs Gandhi's ministers, or roughly every second member of the ministerial council, found himself in a new office, and addressing himself to new problems. Considering the fact that no reshuffle of such dimensions had taken place during the 33 months of her rule, it could well have marked a starting over. Yet it did not. With a rare cynicism she passed up this opportunity, exactly midway through her current tenure, to realise at last her 1980 poll-clinching slogan: 'Elect The Government That Works'.

Like the constant clatter of the shuttle on a loom, Mrs Gandhi's ministers wove like patterns on a crazy quilt between the endless array of the capital's bhavans. With not a single addition to the Cabinet, nor a single subtraction, the custody of the mammoth empires in the *sarkar* changed hands. The departments were split and fused together like the squares in a Rubik's Cube. Only five new ministers of state and three new deputy ministers were sworn in: but their entry heralded a chain of changes in the combination of deparments. Of the 59 departments that are managed by secretary-level officials, 27 woke up the next day to greet at least one new minister. The pattern changed, but not the wool. It was a painfully elaborate exercise in shuttling and reshuffling the same jaded bunch.

Endless Shuttle: The reshuffle was ...tuated by the resignation of Giani Zail Si... as home minister in the month of June... made sense that the Giani's berth would... filled by a senior Cabinet minister and... impression had gained ground that so... minister with an untainted public repu... tion, such as External Affairs Minister ... Narasimha Rao, would get the home por... lio. But Mrs Gandhi sprang a surprise e... on the most determined gambler-again... odds when she named Prakash Chand S... 62, the man who had only recently taken... flak for the controversial Kuo Oil deal (IN... TODAY, July 31), as the home minister.

A chain reaction followed. The bu... tious Ghani Khan Chowdhury, the erstw... energy minister, moved up the ladder t...



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...hi in the more prestigious Railway ... The energy portfolio, in its turn, ...ed on to the Petroleum Ministry. ...e petroleum minister, finding his ...o full, had to part with chemicals ...lizers, which ultimately went to ...suthe, the former information and ...sting (I&B) minister.

...orphaned I&B Ministry was prom... to new entrant N.K.P. Salve, as a ...of state with independent charge. ...me sweep, however, Anant Prasad ...the befuddled minister for civil ...and tourism, lost his twin empire, ...as bifurcated and parcelled out to ...ependent care of two ministers of ...agwat Jha Azad and Khursheed ...han. Sharma hopped ac... the far less glamorous ...ications Ministry, while ...guered occupant, C.M. ...moved over to the duller ...f shipping and transport, ...lacing its minister, Veer... il, who moved over to the ...ortfolio.

...er Levels: Around this ...f musical chairs was built ...-plot involving deputy ...s and ministers of state. ...ed with the delayed exit ... Sisodia and Charanjit ..., ministers of state who ... five long months been on ...g line as their Rajya Sabha ...ship had expired in April ...the party high command bothering ...modate them.

...Chanana-Sisodia tragedy was part... ...ide light of by the inclusion of new ...(*see box*), and the place-hopping, ...d originally started as the innocent ...r a new home minister, multiplied ...itude like a dab of ink on a blotting ...t the changes were not marked by ...work planning; on the other hand, ...re the stamp of tired minds trying ...up a job without any preparatory ...e gaffes were exposed slowly and by ...uts, as newer changes were ordered ...mber 5 and September 11.

...e of the gaffes were quite ludicrous, ...clerical blunders. There was no ...reason for the Coal Department ...o Narain Dutt Tiwari when his ...s were overburdened with industry ...steel and mines. So presto, days later ...withdrawn from him and hitched ...v Shanker's sprawling but homo... ...mpire of petroleum and energy. Far ...hierarchical ladder, Kalpnath Rai, ...nister for parliamentary affairs, was ...e suddenly found Delhi strongman ...Bhagat foisted over his head as ...of state. Rai, a burly ex-wrestler, burst into tears before Mrs Gandhi, and she tossed a pacifier into his mouth by way of the additional-deputy ministership in the Industry Ministry.

The holes in the blueprint kept exposing themselves with every passing hour. The last echo of the reshuffle actually died down nine days later when Mohsina Kidwai, the affable Uttar Pradesh MP and chief of the state Congress(I) unit, was sworn in as minister of state. With Kidwai's appointment, the President's office celebrated the cranking out of its 42nd notification of ministerial changes in 33 months: one change every 23 days. Said a minor cog in New Delhi's mind-boggling bureaucratic wheel: "At this rate more ministers will pass through the minis-

"Like the constant clatter of the shuttle on the loom, Mrs Gandhi's ministers wove like patterns on a crazy quilt between the endless array of the capital's bhavans. With not a single addition to the Cabinet, nor a single subtraction, the custody of the mammoth empires in the sarkar changed hands."

tries than tourists passing through India Gate."

Secret Moves: The changes, though signifying no bold departure from the past, were nevertheless shrouded in impenetrable secrecy. Only R.K. Dhawan, special assistant to the prime minister, was privy to the decisions and that too for the most practical of reasons: he had to type out the three-page official letter to the President. The Cabinet Secretariat was totally in the dark; so were the much-trumpeted independent advisers to the prime minister, including G. Parthasarathy, who heard the news on the radio.

So tight was the veil of secrecy that only two of the five new ministers of state and two of the three new deputy ministers were present at the brief swearing-in ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on September 2. Bhagat had in fact gone to attend a function at Raj Niwas, home of the Lt-Governor of Delhi, to welcome its new incumbent Jagmohan, when the news reached him and he had to rush in. Ramachandra Rath, the newly appointed minister of state for chemicals and fertilizers, had just locked up his MP flat on Pandara Road and gone home to Orissa, thus being obliged to be away from the swearing-in ceremony. Ashok Gehlot, who made it at the last moment, had been planning to leave for home the same evening.

The secrecy was as if born out of diffidence. It seemed as though Mrs Gandhi was reluctant to disoblige anyone. She did not sack a single Cabinet minister, a benignness which is quite out of character, considering her record of dropping nine Cabinet ministers in the four years between 1971 and 1975. Even in the post-1980 period she had suddenly got tough and sacked two of her Cabinet ministers, Kamalapati Tripathi, the old and venerable father-figure from Uttar Pradesh and Vidya Charan Shukla, the debonair leader from Madhya Pradesh. But an inexplicable softness overtook her recently, preventing her from using the boot.

Critical Views: A large section of the media dismissed the changes as an exercise in futility. *The Indian Express* captioned its strongly-worded editorial on the subject—almost predictably—as 'A Permanent Joke'. *The Statesman* called the changes a "fatuous exercise" and wrote editorially that these "will not serve anyone any purpose". Even a steadfast admirer of Mrs Gandhi like Inder Malhotra, resident editor of *The Times of India*, was moved to admit that "the exercise appears to have been without any clear pattern or purpose".

The appointment of Sethi as the home minister showed best the sign of the times. The Home Ministry, with its vertiginous labyrinth of powerful departments, including the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Intelligence Bureau, has always been a happy hunting ground for the party in power. Under Giani Zail Singh, the Home Ministry became a willing vehicle for carrying out even the smallest of orders from the Prime Minister's Secretariat. Sethi is reputed to be a match for the Giani in his readiness to cooperate with the high command.

Days later, Congress(I) circles, particularly those claiming inside knowledge, came up with piecemeal explanations for the reshuffle. The arguments that are being trotted out include;

► Mrs Gandhi chose Sethi as home minister precisely because he was under attack from the Opposition. This was her unique way of cocking a snook at the Opposition;

► with Sethi's appointment, Mrs Gandhi also shuffled down two of her ministers who had proved patently incompetent, such as C.M. Stephen and A.P. Sharma;

► she wanted to rap Vasant Sathe on the knuckles for his conciliatory gestures to the press on the Bihar Bill, though Mrs Gandhi

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prefers the relationship to stay generally embattled;

► she also wanted a second rung of ministers from the minority communities to come up, and thus she arrayed N.K.P. Salve, a Christian, and Mohsina Kidwai behind Stephen and Khan Chowdhury;

► the creation of separate departments for sports in the charge of Buta Singh non-conventional sources with C.P.N. Singh and environment under Digvijay Singh indicate new importance to these areas,

► she also intended to infuse young blood: hence, the choice of Ramachandra Rath as minister of state and Ghulam Nabi Azad and Ashok Gehlot as deputy ministers;

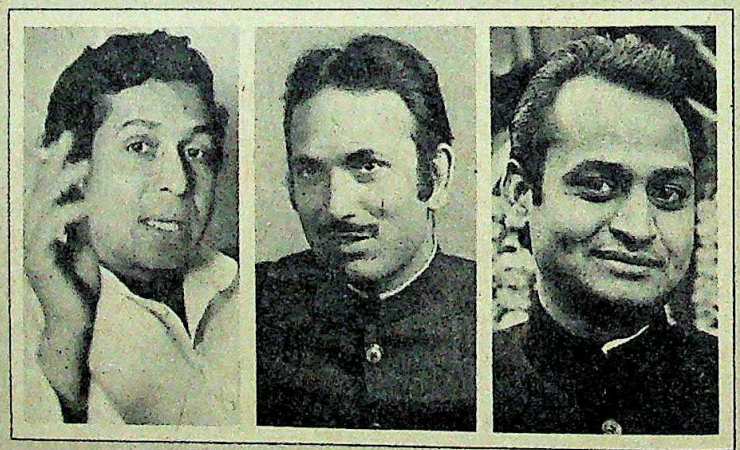
► that Rath, who has an independent power base in Orissa was being elected as alternative to Chief Minister J.B. Patna and

► the choice of Delhi MP H.K.L. Bha was entirely in line with the boomerang-return of Lt-Governor Jagmohan to capital, both being intended to help Congress(I) win the impending elections the Delhi Metropolitan Council.

The Young Ones

DOWN the ministerial line, the tail-end beneficiaries of the recent round of portfolio-switches were a bunch of young Galahads with whom the late Sanjay Gandhi had formed this Arthurian roundtable. The triumphant troika, comprising of Ramachandra Rath, 36, Ghulam Nabi Azad, 33, and Ashok Gehlot, 31, represent the thin icing on the Youth Congress cake scooped up by Mrs Gandhi this time, to be flaunted as her clinching answer to the rebels' charge that her younger son's followers were being ignored.

Of the three, the rise of Rath is certainly the most spectacular. Coming on the heels of his long hibernation ever since mentor Sanjay died in June 1980, Rath's appointment as minister of state for chemicals and fertilisers catapulted him head and shoulder above all other Congress(I) men from his home state, Orissa, except for Chief Minister Janaki Ballabh Patnaik, his one-time ally but now his rival.



(From left) Rath, Azad and Gehlot: sop to the Sanjay camp?

Way below Rath, down the ministerial pecking order lie such veterans of the Orissa Congress(I) as Brajmohan Mohanty, a mere deputy minister, though he is a working committee member of the party and had earlier held such coveted posts as the state revenue minister and the speaker of the state Assembly. "Rath's appointment has no doubt created a ticklish situation," admitted one of Mohanty's aides hesitantly.

Temporary Eclipse: Still very few of the Orissa Congress(I) MP's grudge Rath's impressive rise because there is a general unanimity about his "drive and stamina". In 1977, when the Congress was blotted out of most of the country's political map, Rath was among the lucky four Congressmen who still managed to win from Orissa. Later on, Sanjay made him the president of the All India Youth Congress(I), much to the chagrin of his close friends who had aspired for the post.

His luck ran out temporarily soon after Sanjay's death when the party high command made him lay down office on the ground that he had crossed 35 and was therefore not qualified to be in the Youth Congress(I) any longer. Rath lay low for some time, and his quietness was interpreted as a sure sign of his arch rival, Patnaik's growing clout.

Rath heeded the warning, and withdrew—at least visibly—from what he describes as "manipulative politics" to work amidst his electorate at Aska, his constituency on the bank of the picturesque Chilka lake. Earlier this year, he bounced back as a man whom the new Messiah, Rajiv Gandhi, would trust even though he never had to openly ingratiate himself into Rajiv's favour the way most other Youth Congressmen did.

Donning his faded safari suit, pressed with care for the occasion of attending his first day in office, and puffing away rather precociously at his characteristic pipe, a roly-poly and cheerful Rath told INDIA TODAY: "With Sanjay, as well as with Rajiv, I've always maintained a respectful distance. The high command appreciates you when you work for the party and the country. Whether you're somebody's friend from the school-days is of no material consequence."

Subtle Turn-about: Azad was the general secretary of the All India Youth Congress(I) when Rath was its president. At that time, this lean and lanky Kashmiri youth used to share a flat with Rath and the duo got on well. Last year, however, Azad replaced Rath as the Youth Congress(I) president and soon acquired for himself the image of a crafty tight-rope walker subtly turning the organisation away from the spell of Sanjay's followers towards Rajiv.

Persons close to Azad say he had an identity problem as a Kashmiri who had to get himself elected from Maharashtra because he had no base in his home state. During the 1980 elections, Sanjay almost coerced Abdul Rehman Antulay, the former Maharashtra chief minister, into accommodating Azad as the Congress(I) nominee for the Washim constituency in the state.

However, Azad's competence as the sole arbiter of the party's youth wing hardly matched up to his loyalty to Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv. Under Azad, the Youth Congress(I) began to function almost as beningnly, and blandly, as the Salvation Army—opening up a blood donation camp here or planting a tree there. His new posting is seen as the high command's two-pronged strategy to reward a trusted but ineffectual ally with an easier job and, at the same time, to replace him eventually with a tougher person at the head of the youth outfit.

Surprise Choice: While both Rat

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R is foul, and foul is fair. A similar
ical reversal of values overtook Mrs
dhi as she ordered the Cabinet cha-
ne was the principle of punishment-
ard. Forgotten was the norm that
ublic life should not only be clean
appear to be so, and those who
it should be at least removed from
ge. On the contrary, the reshuffle

put a premium on inefficiency, on hamfistedness and on brazen disregard of values. It stood out in stark contrast to the standards set by the late Jawaharlal Nehru when he had accepted the resignation of his finance minister, T.T. Krishnamachari, after his name got involved in the notorious Haridas Mundhra scandal.

But this stubbornness too was in character with her, as was this haughty, amoral and contemptuous rejection of accusations levelled at her team-mates by the Opposition. But what was totally out of character was the dithering over the final list of changes, the confusion and the moments of absolute indecision. For nine days, she kept on changing the list, playing with her Tweedledums and Tweedledees, and yet could not arrive at a final solution.

Allocation of portfolios is a delicate exercise in two ways: choosing the personnel and then allocating the portfolios. Clustering of two portfolios in one ministerial hand is inevitable as there will always be more departments than ministers. But to select the allied fields, the ministries that can be connected through a symbiotic link, demands precise understanding of the Government.

was entrusted with both labour and rehabilitation; Rai, as deputy minister, was asked to lend his weighty presence to both parliamentary affairs and industries; C.P.N. Singh, as minister of state, was made answerable to two bosses, the prime minister herself as she retained the science and technology portfolio, and Shiv Shanker, as Singh's other charge as minister of state for non-conventional energy sources came under him. It was one of the messiest misalliances of Central portfolios. Said Rai: "I've no problem; I can manage both." Singh hastened to rationalise: "There is a thematic resemblance between science and technology on one hand and non-conventional energy sources on the other. This is more important than the fact that I'm under two ministers."

The bureaucrats in the ministerial corridors are far less enthusiastic. Said an official: "The deputy ministers are not direct decision-makers, but they sit on various intra- and inter-ministerial committees. Now it will be a hard task to get their dates or even to acquaint them with the problems that are to be discussed at the meetings." Azad, the minister of state for civil supplies as well as civil aviation, may, for instance, have to

"..the men in charge of most of the important portfolios were changing faster than patterns in a kaleidoscope. Thus the labour minister was changed six times, works and housing four times, education three times, tourism three times, civil supplies four times, railways four times, petroleum four times, shipping and transport four times and commerce three times. Even the sensitive Defence Ministry... witnessed four changes since 1980."

This time Mrs Gandhi attempted to recluster the portfolios, was successful in some cases, but failed in most others.

Illogical Allocations: Petroleum, for instance, had become a gargantuan department in itself and thus its de-linking from chemicals and fertilizers was generally regarded as fully justified. Also logical was the yoking together of the twin departments of petroleum and energy, which, with the addition of coal, became a compact authority to decide on all matters pertaining to non-nuclear and non-conventional sources of energy. But down the line the re-clustering of other portfolios turned out to be a mindless clerical exercise.

Thus, civil supplies and civil aviation got tagged together by their only visible link, the word 'civil'; the same deputy minister divide his week between the two ministries the way Pranab Mukherjee, the minister for finance, used to divide the week between commerce and steel and mines when he held both charges. "This is counter-productive," observed the official.

Fast Shifts: The changes, made with a veneer of administrative expediency, betrayed a singular restlessness in the highest echelons of power, an indecisiveness which bordered on a sense of insecurity. In fact the men in charge of most of the important portfolios were changing faster than patterns in a kaleidoscope. Thus since January 1980 the labour minister changed six times, works and housing four times, education three times, tourism three times, civil supplies four times, railways four times, petroleum four times, shipping and transport

d had headed the Youth Cong-
d were therefore likely candidates
ssion into the Council of Minis-
inclusion of Ashok Gehlot—a
onentity from Jodhpur in Rajas-
ised quite a few eyebrows. Geh-
course no lightweight in front
tion politics, having headed the
Students Union of India (NSUI),
gress(I)'s student wing, for five
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e beyond the presidentship of
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he youth politics of Rajasthan,
as almost always overshadowed
mesake, Janardan Singh Gehlot,
bulldozed his way onto the scene
d-mouthed supporter of Sanjay
he Emergency and afterwards.
withdrawn, Ashok Gehlot was in
er known in the Congress(I)
r his skill at magic shows. He
Macao to represent India in the
Surprise Show. At his North
at in the capital, his favourite
is to tease his guests by un-
y charging them with theft, and
ing his hand into their pockets
ut a 'stolen' pen. The deputy
ip was the latest bunny rabbit
ly produced from under his
p.
choice of the threesome is ob-
calculated to knock the bottom
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and's allies have had a raw deal
ands of Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv.
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nd ministerial berths were denied
ore prominent among Sanjay's
who, for a few weeks prior to
's open revolt in May this year,
y dithered. Notable among
Jagdish Tytler and Kamal Nath.
whom, despite their protestations
ntrary, are regarded by the high
d as doubtful gift. The rest of the
cluding the new minister, how-
ve proved their loyalty so well
cannot any longer be mistaken
s of any kind. "Their only equi-
said a disappointed Youth
(I) wag, "is the animal that
ode." Amen.

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four times, and commerce three times. Even the sensitive Defence Ministry, which calls for a stable leadership, witnessed four changes since 1980. Only the external affairs minister was left undisturbed, but that too because of the fact that it is Mrs Gandhi herself who calls the shots in the ministry.

The slapdash changes indicate, if anything, Mrs Gandhi's constant, and frustrating, search for the right man for the right job. But, strangely enough, the search is confined to only a handful of men and it meticulously keeps out those Congress(I) MP's who have an earlier record of public service or have images of their own. Thus, nonentities in the Maratha politics of Maharashtra, such as Shivraj Patil and Vijay Patil, find toe-holds in the ministerial council while veteran Maratha leaders like Y.B. Mohite or Premalatai Chavan, both MP's and both with a record of unswerving loyalty to Mrs Gandhi, do not find places.

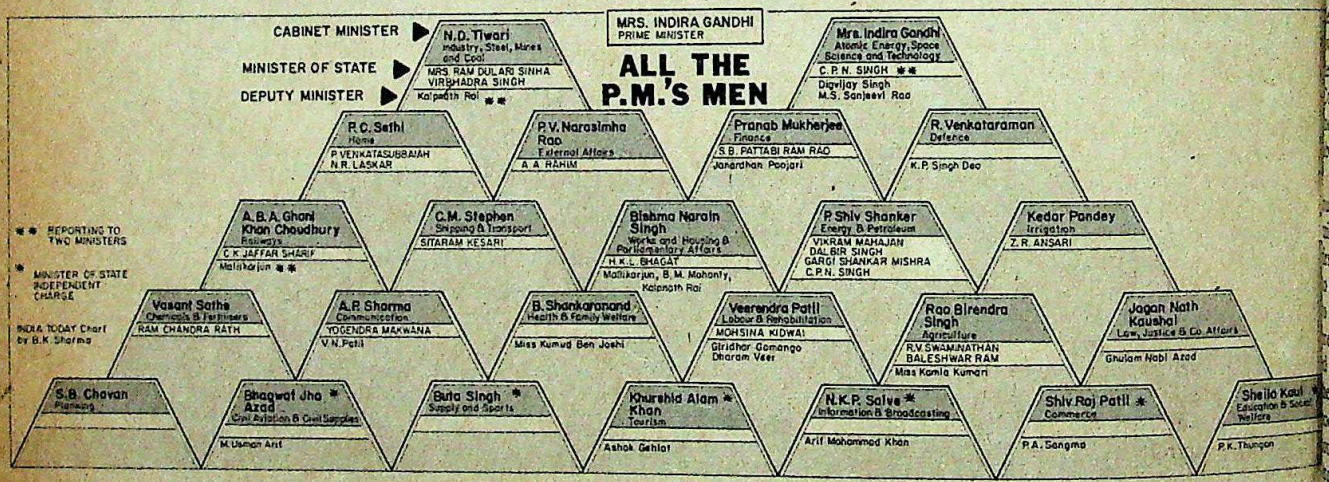
Similarly, a rather lightweight Ashok Gehlot can work his way into the council from Rajasthan, but the claims of Mool Chand Daga, a veteran in the state's politics, are disregarded. From Andhra Pradesh, the state that elected Mrs Gandhi, Pattabhi Rama Rao, whose only qualification is that he belongs to the same caste as that of N.T. Rama Rao, matinee idol and the Congress(I)'s arch enemy, makes the grade as minister of state for finance, while Brahmananda Reddy, a former Union home minister, merely looks on. Mrs Gandhi allows Khan Chowdhury the luxury of hopping on to the prestigious Railway Ministry after an undistinguished record as energy minister; at the same time she refuses to utilise the services of Ashok Sen, a veteran MP, star lawyer of the country and former Union law minister.

Raw Hands: Said a former aide of Mrs Gandhi, now reflecting on times past and present from his retirement: "There was a time when she was not afraid of bringing in people who were equally talented, or even more talented. That was indeed her strength. Now she is afraid of talent the way—I'm sorry to use the analogy—nocturnal animals are afraid of light." For instance, except Mrs Gandhi and Sethi, there is not a single member of the present Cabinet with ministerial experience of more than one term. In 1971, on the other hand, she chose a team with as many as four experienced men, even though the split in the party two years earlier had marked a total break with the past.

The gnawing anxiety to steer clear of experienced, rooted men also marks Mrs Gandhi's unique way of handling the delicate issue of allowing regional representation (*see chart*). The gigantic state of Uttar Pradesh, with 67 Congress(I) MP's, has only one Cabinet-rank minister while Karnataka, with only 36 MP's, has three. Haryana, with its seven MP's, has one Cabinet minister while Punjab, with 13 MP's, has none. West Bengal, with its tenuous contingent of just four Congress(I) MP's, finds a representation in the Cabinet; but Rajasthan, with 27 MP's, has the nominal representation of just two deputy ministers.

A fuller, proportionate representation to the states depends upon the party high command's willingness to open up the Cabinet to democratic forces, to select personnel not on the basis of its own th perception but on the prime consideratio acknowledging the strength of each unit of the party. Observed H.N. Bahug MP and leader of the Democratic Soci Party: "Mrs Gandhi wants gutless ticians like N.D. Tiwari, who earned sobriquet of 'New Delhi' Tiwari during Emergency, to overshadow all others. doesn't want an alternative leadership grow in the state." Akbar Ahmed, Ma Gandhi's lieutenant, rammed home point further when he said: "Uttar Pra is the private fiefdom of Rajiv Gandhi Arun Nehru. No person who can above them will be tolerated. You exten same logic to the entire country, and y find that she has chosen only the weeds every state, leaving out the tall trees."

The overriding consideration in ministerial sweepstakes has been just loyalty to Mrs Gandhi. Brahmananda R



Shrinking Power: A minister is decorative centre-piece and the mini chair is not a fountainhead of power w responsibility. It is the duty of a mini assess the problems of his departm plan for the future as well as the pres get the plan implemented and to defe department's activities on the floor House. But the Government under Gandhi, over the years, has witnessed constant shrinking of the minister's effected first by her choice of personn and Yeshwantrao Chavan, both powered leaders in their home states had served for years in the Union Ca were kept hanging in limbo just be they had once rebelled against Mrs Ga In contrast, Stephen and Sharma ma to hang on to the Cabinet by the skin o teeth only because there was no red ink on their dossiers of obedience to the minister.

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y constantly shuttling them around. ed with the idea of not letting grass nder the ministerial feet, all she has ed is to raise a battery of superficial acking specific understanding of any lar subject.

inister are often not to blame as none m possesses superhuman intellect. Before they get the hang of a particular ministry, they are packed off to something entirely dissimilar. Said an official: "What will poor P.C. Sethi do? He moved so abruptly between housing and railways that it's but natural for him to confuse between housing stock and rolling stock. And Vasant Sathe is obviously wedged between culture and agriculture." Only the babudom is unchanged and stoically regards the entry and exit of ministers as a mere passing show.

Mrs Gandhi has added a new element to the systematic downgrading of the institution of ministers by taking more and more departments away from the charge of Cabinet members and putting them into the

PORTFOLIOS

Rise And Fall

IT WAS the hour for preening and basking in the gentle glow of self-importance. Bhagwat Jha Azad, the inister of state who got independent harge of the prestigious civil aviation rtfolio, took exactly 48 hours to mouth s first policy pronouncement. He hit t at the system of the executive class on e Airbus fleet of Indian Airlines, scribed it as "inconsistent with our owed socialistic principles", and clared his intention to abolish it. ost of introducing the system three onths ago: Rs 11 lakh. Cost of olition: Rs 3 lakh.

A.B.A. Ghani Khan Chowdry, the newly-appointed railway inister, took four days to make his rst policy statement. He travelled Calcutta and drove unannounced Howrah station, where, in the esence of awed officials, he mingl- with passengers and listened to ir complaints. The same after-on, he addressed his first press nference as railway minister, and nounced that he wanted to give mplete autonomy to the general nagers.

The others who should feel ppy at least avoided making pub- statements. P.C. Sethi, whose ointment as home minister upset okmakers' calculations, attended Assam talks as his first engage-nt in office. But he made it a point take with him R. Venkataraman, defence minister, who had been ing as the home minister, and uested him to carry on as chief otiator. P. Shiv Shanker, the fat- among the ministers, stuck to his aller office as petroleum minister Shastri Bhavan, while the larger unk of the staff now under him at the Energy Ministry housed Shram-Shakti Bhavan.

Mixed Rewards: Buta Singh, only Sikh in the Council of inisters, was elated to assume independent charge of the glamorous sports portfolio on the eve of the ninth Asiad in the capital. C.P.N. Singh, who had slid down the hierarchical steps last year when he was transferred from the powerful Defence Ministry to the back-room Department of Science and Technology, notched up a gain this time as he became the minister of state for the newly-created and ponderously named Department of Non-conventional Energy Sources. Singh was too enthralled at the prospect of getting a bonus foothold to complain about the fact that he now has to shuttle between two bosses, Mrs Gandhi, who is the minister for science and technology, and Shiv Shanker, who holds the charge of energy, conventional and otherwise.

Buta Singh (left) and C.P.N. Singh: promotion

Salve (left) and Bhagat: induction

Sathe (left) and Sharma: demotion

Heady excitement marked the two older men entering the ministry this time—N.K.P. Salve and H.K.L. Bhagat. Salve, a seasoned lawyer, proved his skill at treading cautiously in the very first week when he described himself as a "former journalist" but hedged his bets when called upon to comment on the Bihar Press Bill. Bhagat laboriously went round the Asiad construction sites, tramping with commendable diligence over the raw cement, but as in Salve's case, caution prevailed and he refrained from making any public pronouncements.

Among the dispirited backbenchers were Vasant Sathe, whose transfer from the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, right under the arc lamp of glamour, to the seedy corridors of the Chemicals and Fertilizers Ministry, was archly termed by his critics as the shift from "culture to agriculture".

To make the best of a bad bargain, three rooms were being pulled down in one corner of Shastri Bhavan to set up a new chamber for Sathe. No doubt, all care is being taken to ensure that the suave minister's aesthetic sensibilities are not hurt in the least.

A.P. Sharma divested of his twin empire of civil aviation and tourism, sulkily avoided the press. As the new communications minister, the first gift he received for the house-warming party was the depressing news of the failure of the much-touted Indian communication satellite INSAT-1A.

Hopefully, his future at his new ministry will not be as ill-starred as his beginning.

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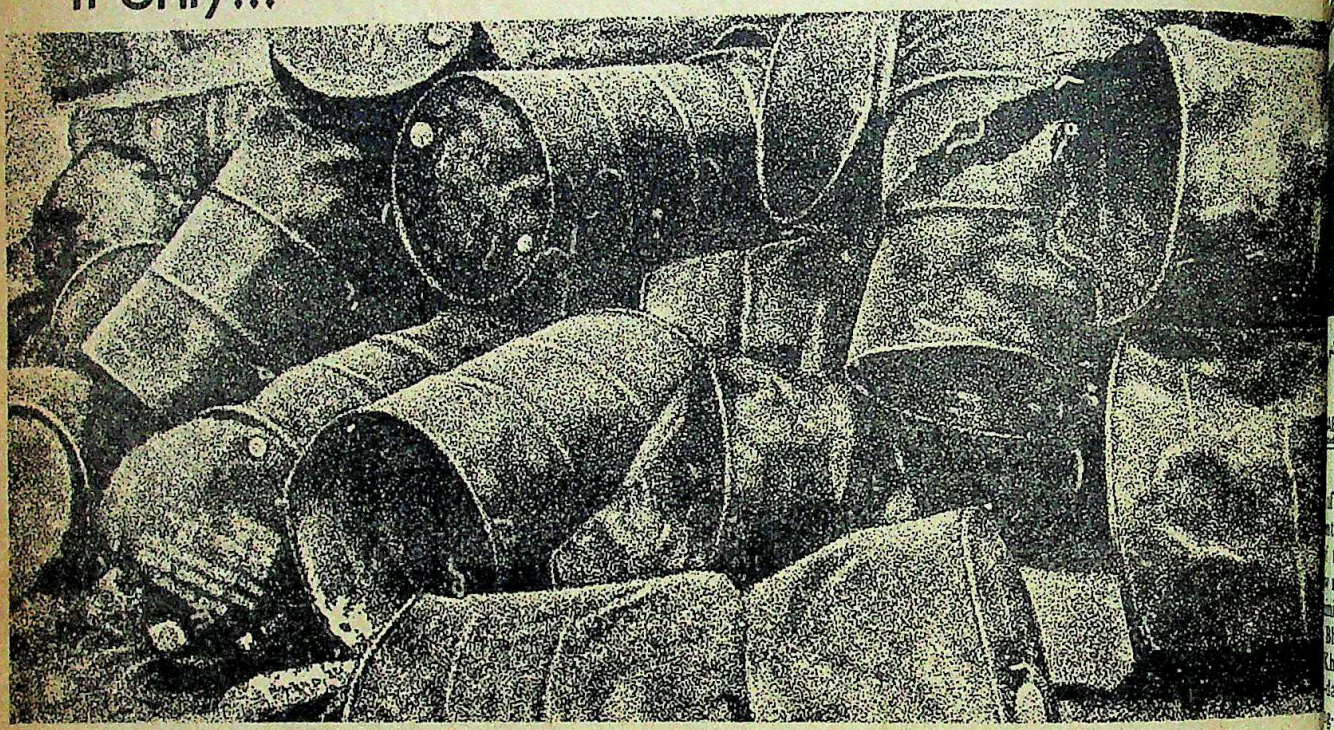
July 1980.

A small oversight in storing, and oil worth Rs. 71 lakhs goes down the drain. If only...



If only prevention had been a priority.

Improper storage of oil drums resulted in a major loss of Rs.7,1 lakhs. Suitable stacking with adequate strapping or lashing would have prevented the loss.

Goods worth Rs.3,500 crores are lost every year in India due to poor packaging, mishandling, improper storage and careless transportation. Besides, there can be indirect loss — failure of contractual responsibility, loss of reputation and market and sometimes even loss of business. And 70% of that loss is preventable.

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Impact: Use the right packaging material, correct jointing and nailing methods and provide adequate cushioning.

Vibration: Ensure proper support and separation within the package and fasten securely.

Compression: Choose rigid packing material. Stack lighter packages on top of heavier ones.

Corrosion: Use moisture-proof materials like barrier materials, dehydrants and coatings on metal components.

Pilferage: Unitise or containerise your products. Use coded markings instead of descriptive labelling.

Pack for the toughest segment of the journey and ensure safe storage and careful handling.

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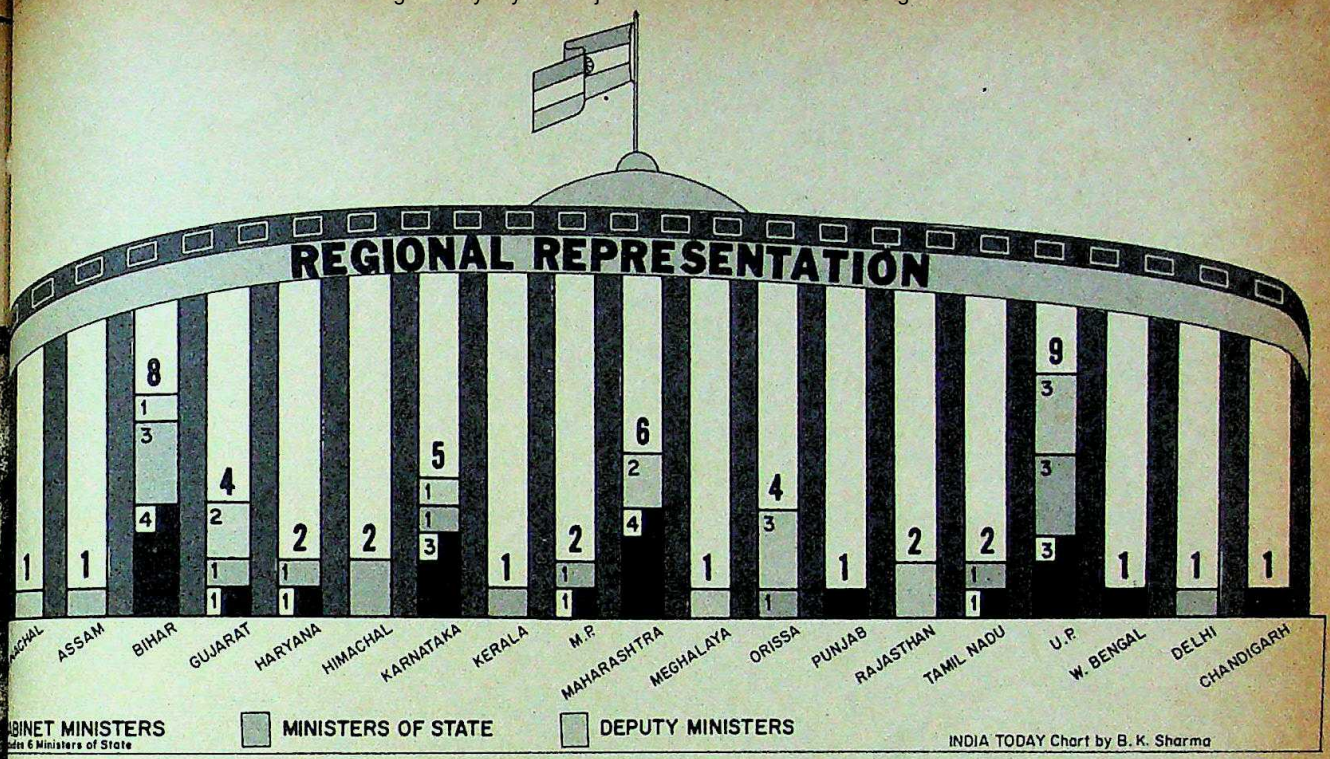
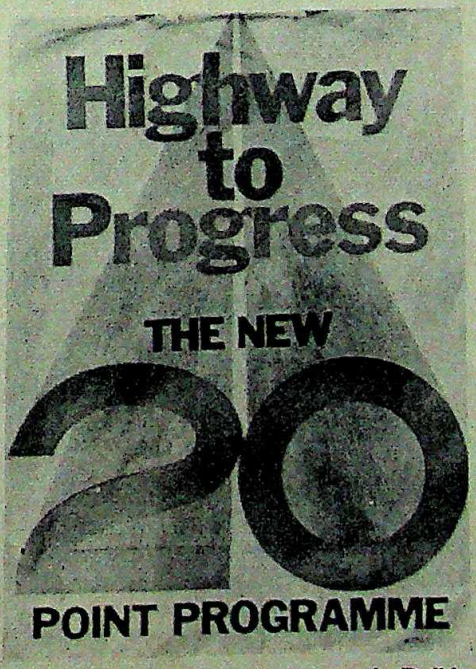


f ministers of state. Thus, with no tation at the Cabinet level, the af- I & B, civil aviation and tourism relegated to secondary importance. isters of state in charge of them, Bhagwat Jha Azad and Khursheed han, can no doubt preside over the day administration of the ministries, g-term decisions, or those of a con- l nature, will all be taken now at the inister's level, and then routed th- the Cabinet where the concerned es have no spokesmen.

HAT has she achieved by shoving the 27 men and women up and down a hierarchical line? The an- rhaps, lies embedded in her unique reflexes, in the see-saw rhythm of nd aggression that has marked the onths of her rule. She was at the top rm in the first six months, till Sanjay June and her life-force sank to its epth. With her, the party and the ment floundered (INDIA TODAY, ber 16–30, 1980). The drained bat- re recharged to the full nine months en she bounced back into the fight- a, and unhesitatingly fired Vidya Shukla from the Cabinet (INDIA April 1–15, 1981).

e expansion of the Council of rs was itself a none too subtle move t assuaging hurt feelings and build- ges with the dissidents by throwing a isterial crumbs from the table. But e more dissidents than crumbs and the reshuffle is naturally followed by heart-burn, frustration and griping in private. Still more bitter are the ministers who have been downgraded, sidelined, or at least not openly patted on the back. To expect them to close ranks is to put an impossible demand on the party. She also frittered away the gilt-edged opportunity that she got in 1980 when as many as 150 freshers stormed their way into the Lok Sabha, all waiting to be reared and trained into mature administrators.



New 20-point programme posters in Delhi: a faltering commitment?

It is only now, after 35 months, that she is admitting a trickle of the young MP's into the corridors of power. The inclusion of Rath, Azad and Gehlot into the Council of Ministers this time is itself a muted but sure acceptance of the strident charge that the younger generation of Congressmen, who had singularly pulled her out of the pit during the Janata period, was now being conveniently sidelined. The seventh Lok Sabha has 103 under-40 Congress(I) MP's, but their representation in the Council of Ministers is on a disproportionately low key.

A senior Congress(I) office-bearer, obviously distressed by the turn of events, bitterly summed up the situation: "There's no leadership at the top. There's no leadership at the bottom. There's only a vast army of middle-rankers, of mediocre men and women basking in the reflected glory of the prime minister. I'm not sure if they can hold the reins of the state as the run-up to the 1985 general elections begins and the need arises to hasten the pace of development all around."

There are already slacks in the Government which the ministers are quite incapable of pulling in. Prices are again on the rise, the official wholesale price index having gone up 6 per cent in the last six months, and the foreign reserve, which stood at Rs 4,800 crore (excluding gold and special drawing rights) on April 1, 1981, is now down to Rs 3,634 crore. The foreign trade deficit today has reached a whopping Rs 5,000 crore, and there is no way of cutting it as Indian exports get slowly edged out of the

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world market while the import bill rises in almost geometric progression.

There are disconcerting indications that even the much touted new 20-point plan (INDIA TODAY, February 28) is heading for a dismal failure. An interim implementation report of the Planning Commission, monitoring progress of the plan over the April–June quarter this year, concluded that altogether 17 of the 20 points could not be implemented even to the extent of a mere 25 per cent of the target. The report's further shocking revelations are:

► achievement has been as low as 7 per cent in providing house sites;

► targets for sterilisation fell short by an astonishing 90.9 per cent;

► the programme of providing assistance to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe members was ahieved up to just 6.8 per cent and 5.3 per cent of the targets;

► only 8.9 per cent of the needy poor were given assistance for building houses; and

► a mammoth and problem-ridden state, such as Bihar, exceeded the target in only one of the 16 points that it had taken up, the figures for some other states being Assam: three out of 10, Haryana: two out of 14, Karnataka: three out of 14; Kerala: two out of 14; Madhya Pradesh: three out of 16; Tamil Nadu: four out of 11; and Uttar Pradesh: two out of 14.

With such a depressing track record of her government, and the constant drift of the economy towards a new pit of stagnation, Mrs Gandhi cannot but look up to a few capable managers to show a way out of the present impasse. She has no visible challenge, at least not from the fragmented ranks of the opposition parties. The only threat to her is the wayward drift of her government, a trend, which, if not checked, can be turned by the Opposition to its advantage.

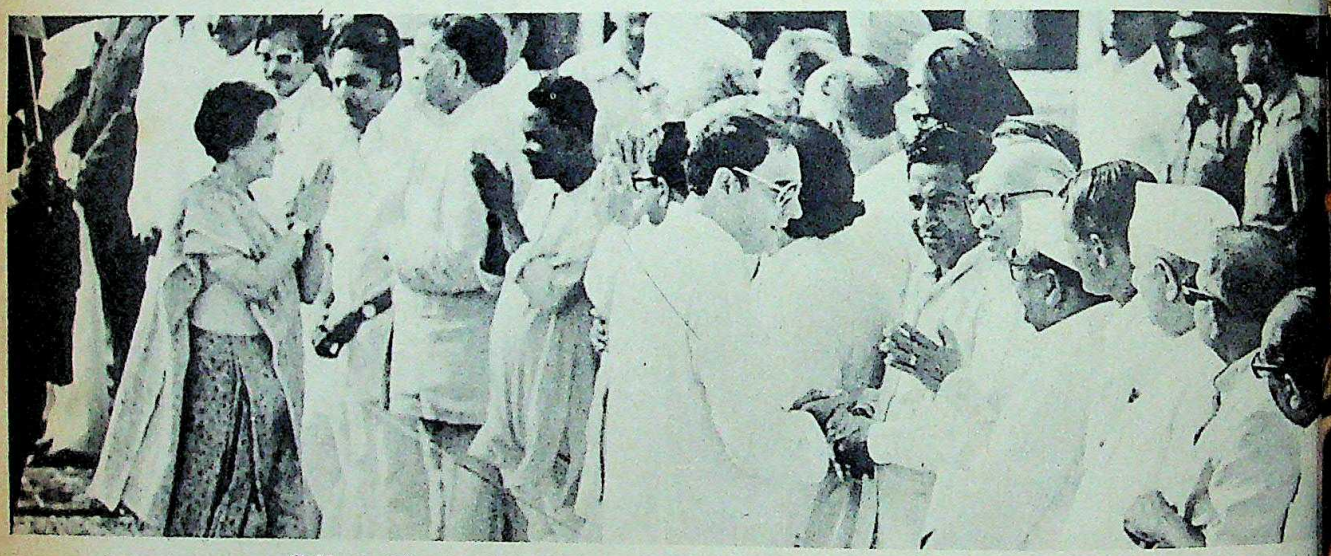
The present Council of Ministers is unlikely to go through any drastic changes at least till next year, when elections take place in the two Congress(I) citadels of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka as well as in Assam, Tripura and Jammu & Kashmir. The electorate needs at least tangible evidence that the Congress(I) at the Centre is both willing and capable before it votes the party back to power in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. In Assam, the protracted movement has already churned up a credible Opposition, and signs of drift and vacillation at the Centre will only enhance a final collapse of the weak Congress(I) edifice in the state. In Tripura and Jammu & Kashmir where the Congress(I), as the main opposition party, harbours the ambition of capturing power and is raring to go, inaction and inertia at the Centre can compel it to stop in its track.

Failed Hopes: Last year when Rajiv joined the party to "help mummy" it was widely believed that his role would be to scout for talents to build up a new team from scratch, and to bring about—in the benign shadow of his mother—a smooth transition of generations in leadership. But such hopes are yet to be realised, if at all. For the moment, Mrs Gandhi is obviously anxious to ensure that Rajiv's slow and limping journey towards the seat of power is not interrupted by road blocks. This perhaps explains her persistent insistence on loyalty as prime qualification and refusal to usher into the Cabinet people with experience who might grow into figures of strength on their own merit. After all, she had to contend with too many 'experienced' people herself after her accession to power in 1966. Said a senior member of her government, in an unguarded moment: "*Hum to sub plate par chamche hain. Kabhi iss plate par, kabhi us plate*

(We are just chamchas on a plate: sometimes on one plate and sometimes on another

Slowly but surely, Rajiv himself joi the juggernaut-like Congress establishm which he could not beat. The latest reshu confirmed it; with the exception Jagannath Kaushal, the law minister had been inducted in the post-Sanjay era a single member of the Cabinet that San had virtually hand-picked has been chan

Mrs Gandhi gets into her elements when she is faced with real challenges, ei from within the country or from outs During the Emergency and after, she aglow with vitality because of the chall that stared her in the face. Also it was Sa who became her fighting arm, her one-m army. It remains to be seen if Rajiv become a fighter when the crunch com



Cabinet ministers seeing off Mrs Gandhi and Rajiv: premium on loyalty

Right now for her time is of the ess She needs time to galvanise the ministers to derive from them that much of the burst of energy which is just needed to c the race. She needs time for the mi rankers to mature. She needs time fo young ministers to grow in experience. ming into a reserve pool of talents. A everything else, she needs time to preci hone her team again into a sharp-e scythe when rust has enveloped the st

But she has only 27 months, o days, to go before the elections. Even a late hour, can she turn the Governm lackadaisical canter into a feisty, wi gallop? Can she cut bureaucratic co and prove her mettle again even thoug sand steadily runs out of her hour-gla the indecisive, shoddily planned and baked reshuffle is an example, the odd certainly stacked against her this time

—SUMIT MITRA and PRABHU CHA

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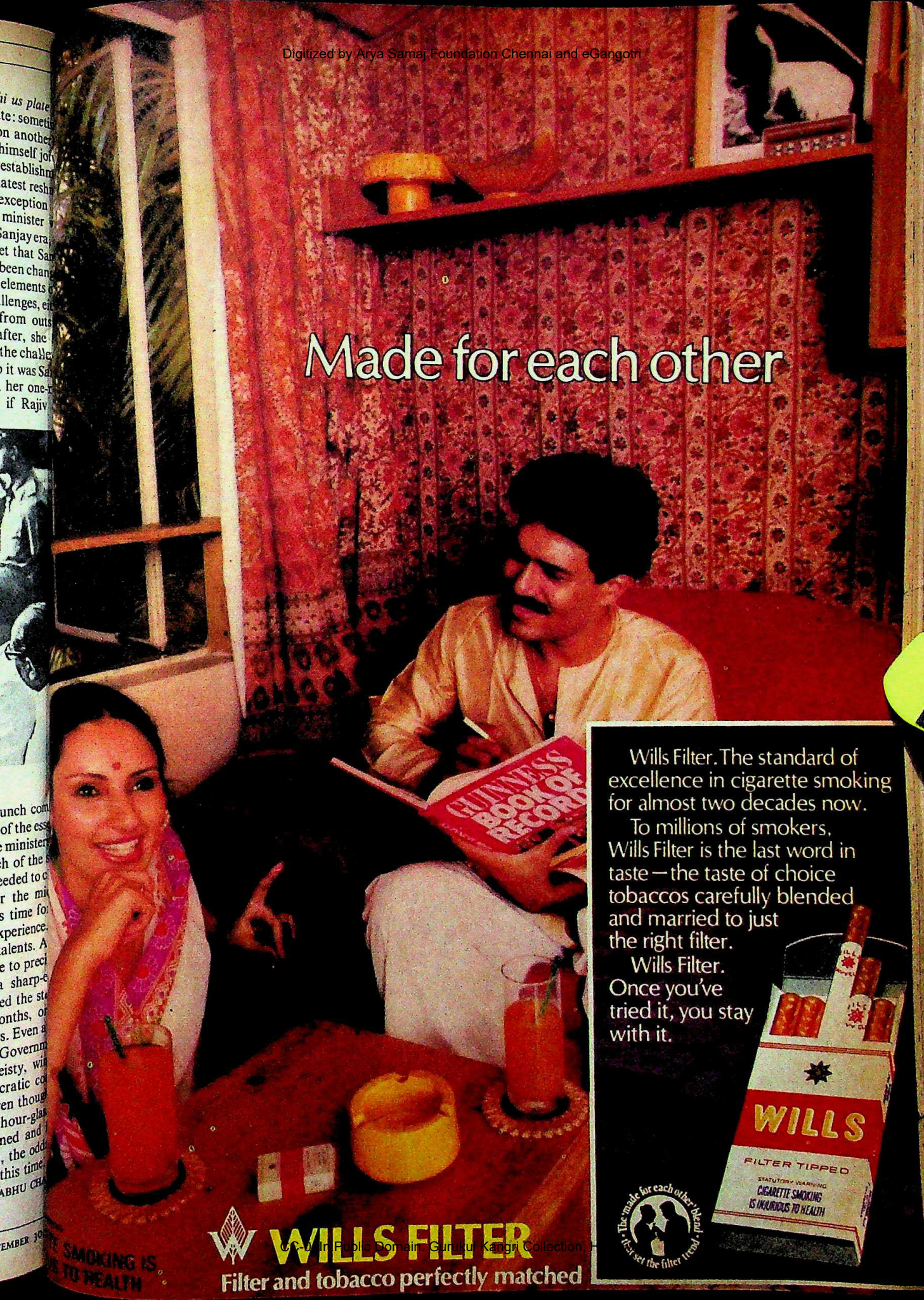

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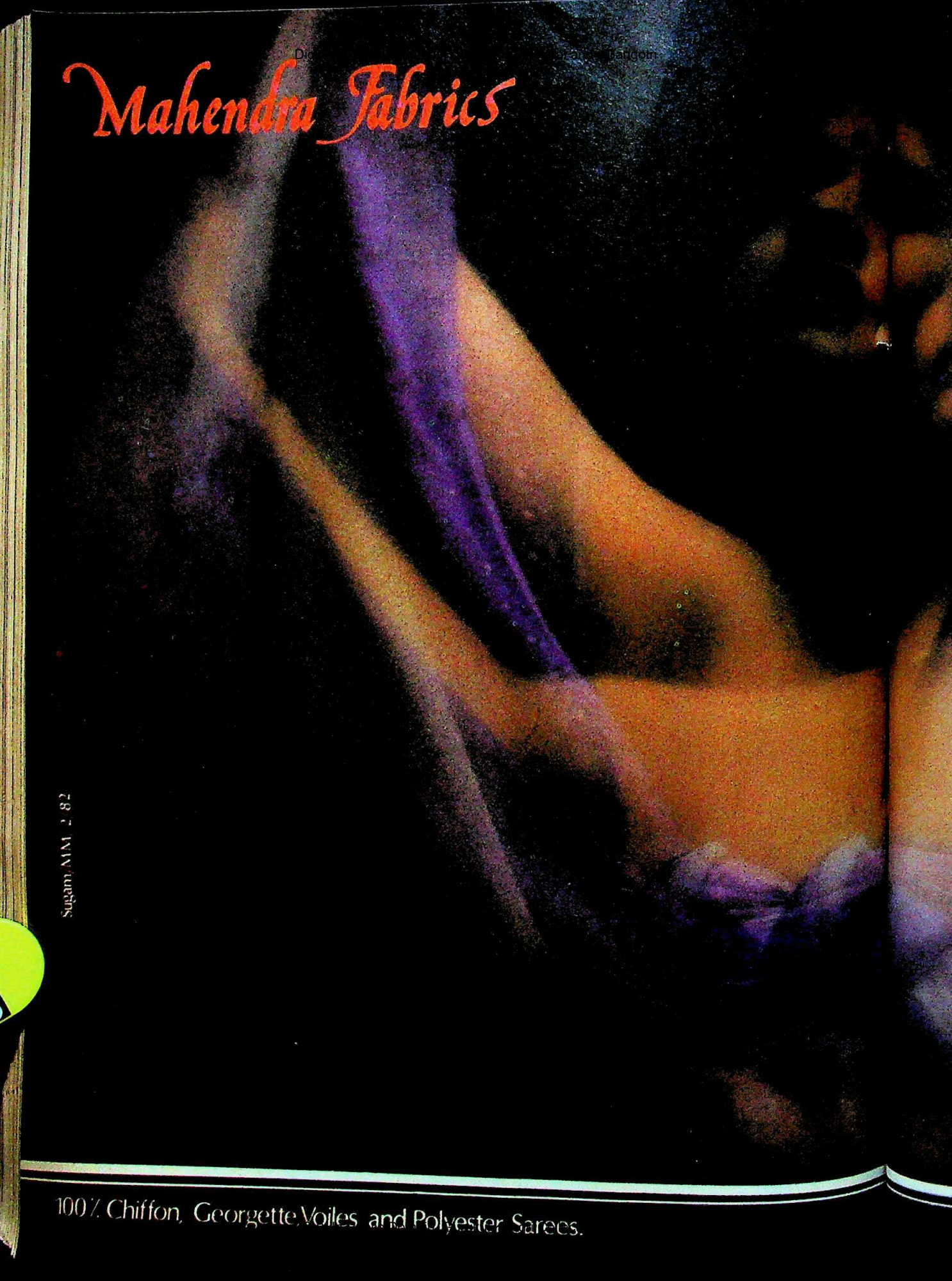

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hutting Up Shop

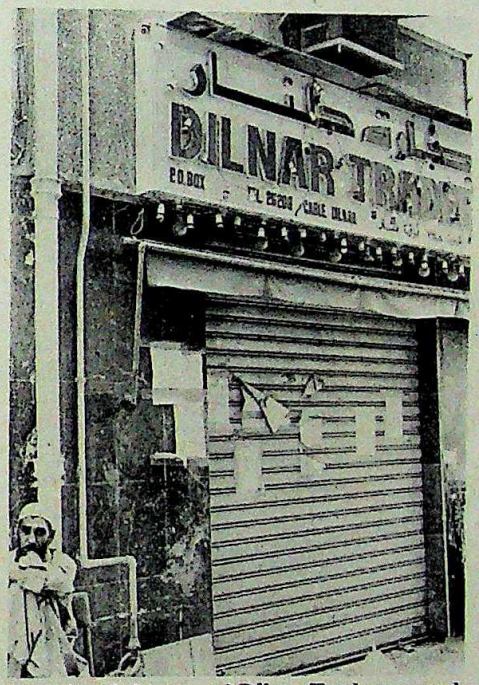
DENLY, and without warning, the f boom has gone into reverse gear. Dubai, the most popular destination, usinessmen have started packing up ing out in a steady stream. With ared to the bone and banks putting crews, Indian merchants in Dubai ken the easy way out—a quiet exit country with all the movable assets lay their hands on.

seemingly endless war between Iran , a steep fall in prices of Japanese nd a credit squeeze by local banks tually crushed the roughly 3,000-ndian business community, already a growing demand for take-over of ess ventures by UAE nationals and a d recession in their textiles and cs market.

t fortnight, in a renewed spell of failures, three prominent Indian ts decided to call it a day and fled the leaving debts totalling 20 million (Rs 52 million). The bankruptcies ck waves through expatriate circles ened the credibility gap created by disappearances one-and-a-half years ce then, 11 Indian businessmen have pulled down the shutters and left the with unpaid loans totalling Dh 47 (Rs 123 million).

p Fall-out: Involved in last 's particularly shocking closures, nshyam Tourani, a textile dealer in es, one of five brothers who have g business in Dubai for 30 years. initially a joint family business, the had set up independent establish-ith the business boom in the '70s. 's company had acquired an im-share of the Iranian market, but big losses with the downturn in re-to Iran following the Gulf war. At of closure, he is said to have left debts ranging between eight to 10 dirhams (Rs 26 million). Jairamdas as, in his forties, has had an equally putation built up by 25 years of in Dubai. In addition to a large in the wholesale trade, he also did business through two retail outlets wadri textile market in Deira, patro-tensively by labourers from the ubcontinent. For Satramdas, diffic-rted shortly after the disruption in re-to Afghanistan following the Soviet . They were compounded by the downturn in re-exports to tan. When he fled last fortnight, ring sent his relatives to India earlier, his tally was 10 million dirhams (Rs 26 million) in unpaid loans including dishonoured cheques for Dh 200,000 (Rs 5.25 lakh). Harish Brothers, the third enterprise to close down, has been a more modest failure by comparison, with outstanding debts totalling just over Dh 150,000 (Rs 3.93 lakh).

While most of the fleeing Indians have been victims of circumstances, there have also been cases of carefully planned frauding of banks or suppliers. Durgo Jethwani of Dilnar Traders, which closed earlier, was found to have been over-invoicing his own imports—financed almost entirely by banks—in collusion with the exporting firm in Hong Kong. After amassing millions of dollars this way, Jethwani, one of the three brothers established in business here for several years, quietly decamped leaving debts totalling almost Dh 16 million (Rs 42 million). Unlike the other businessmen, Jethwani did not go to India, but is said to be in Bangkok where he is reported to have opened a massage parlour.



The closed shutters of Dilnar Traders pasted with municipal notices for outstanding dues

Bank Pressure: In all the cases, there has been a scramble by banks to claim possession of the stocks left behind by fleeing traders. Traders on their part have blamed banks for putting excessive pressure on borrowers when business is bad. "When the going was good, these banks used to persuade merchants to indulge in over-trading and offer finances at 11 or 12 per cent," one leading Indian businessman with interest in textiles and electronics recalled, "but when the slump set in, they arbitrarily raised interest rates to a crippling 22 and 23 per cent." Traders complained that the raised rates were debited to their running accounts without even an intimation in some cases. Those who protested were asked to repay their loans or face legal action.

Foreign banks, unlike locally incorporated ones, have by and large refrained from putting too much pressure on customers in distress. In fact, during a recent visit to Dubai, the chairman of the Hong Kong-based British Bank of the Middle East, Michael Sandberg, openly cautioned banks against taking away the "protective umbrella" when times are bad. Said he: "Banks should show greater understanding towards businessmen who are in distress, otherwise it will not help matters."

Alarmed by the flight of so many Indian merchants, the Dubai Police sent a team of officers to India to discuss the problem and seek the extradition of some of them. But they are understood to have been rebuffed by the Indian authorities, and told that Dubai must take the initiative by returning several COFEPOSA offenders living there before any such proposal can be entertained. The Dubai Chamber of Commerce has now asked the Federation of UAE Chambers of Commerce and Industry to take concerted action to prevent recurrence of such incidents. Among the solutions under consideration is a move to ensure exit permits from the police for all expatriates leaving the country. The proposal has already received qualified support from sections of the bureaucracy.

Protective Measure: Says Ahmed Al Jumairi, under secretary in the UAE Labour Ministry: "The ideas is good and its application could achieve a measure of stability for employers and employees, especially Indian business firms with expatriate partners." The UAE authorities are particularly incensed by reports that many of those who ran away are owners of successful business ventures in India. Jairamdas Satramdas, for instance, is said to own a sugar mill in Kotabundi and Ghanshyamdas Tourani is believed to own a hotel in Bombay.

A section of bankers and businessmen believe that there will be more bankruptcies unless banks soften their attitude and merchants are quickly able to find alternative markets to Iran. With stocks already shrinking in value because of the depreciation of the yen and a fall in prices of Japanese goods, more of them may find it profitable to grab whatever they can and make a fresh start elsewhere.

—ALI ZARIN in Bahrain

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Striking AI workers: no compromise in sight

AIR INDIA

Labour Pains

ITH the sacking of 91 workers employed at the Heathrow Air- and the Bond Street last month, Air India's Maharaja appears to be ailed in a union dispute s escalating without a omise in sight. Some of sacked had been with ompany for over 20 Supported by Britain's union, the Transport eneral Workers Union , the picket lines of the nion Shop Stewards' ittee (USSC) at the Hea- cargo warehouse are the airline hard loss of revenue from Some AI flights have d to be diverted to Ga- Airport. While the stri- aim that over half the work-force has joined ke, with the Bond Street bookings ill operative, AI management cont- o insist that all is well despite pick- Heathrow and central London.

e dispute, involving some 150 AI ees, originated in the management's al introduction of new working in early June, and the dismissal of de Silva, a union shop steward, on ary charges on July 2. Union re- atives say that the new rosters con- d a wage agreement negotiated on 9, 1982 which obliged the manage- consult USSC on any roster chan- ey add that the new system of "fle- ostering" meant longer hours of r the same money, also involving a of staff from one section to ano- ulting a loss of shift pay in excess 0 (Rs 16,500) annually.

Silva's crime was that he had put rcular stating that pending consul- between the union and mana- the agreed roster pattern, and not one, was to be followed. He was with "tampering with a roster", of nekeeping" and "rudeness to a ma-

egations: Since then, the strike ce led by Mala Dhondy, a reser- assistant with the airline, has pre- a list of allegations against the AI ment in London. They point out 1980, AI underwent an exercise in s in conformity with a general the aviation industry to cope with culties created by increased fuel ut-throat competition, general re- and bad management. However, left the airline with a record management to workers (industrial and clerical) ratio of 1:1.4, opening it to charges of not being 'over-manned' but severely 'over-managed'.

Further, they question the lavish perks of the India-based top management which is sent to London on two to three years postings, and allege massive losses incurred by AI through agency sales of tickets and see agents' commissions as a threat to AI staff pay packets. Says Union Branch Chairman Vimal Khosla: "We object to ticket sales profits going to exclusive agencies like the Hindustan Travel Service (HTS). At the moment some 80 per cent of all passengers travelling on AI will have bought their tickets through an agent. This means a tremendous loss of revenue for AI."

Since 1973, AI has had an exclusive contract with the HTS run by Joginder Sangar. According to Sangar, AI allocates 65 per cent of their annual tickets to his agency at a commission rate of 12 per cent. In turn, he farms out his tickets to 450 agents all over Britain. As against the official price of £399 London-Delhi return, AI tickets therefore sell for prices ranging from £345 to £360.

Irregularities: However, the recent collapse of a leading British Airways (BA) ticket agent led to the discovery of irregularities which cost BA over £150 million. Parrying these charges, Regional Director Francis da Gama said: "We have a heavy bank guarantee. More important, we have a weekly collection system from ticket agents and a short-term credit policy." He added: "Our ticket sales through a general sales agency are no higher than other airlines."

Union representatives enumerate other instances of management malpractice which have adversely affected the airline. On April 25, 1982, for example, a senior airline manager and his family, travelling on a stand by basis as "staff on leave" on flight AI-115 refused to disembark at Delhi to accommodate three paying passengers (the plane was full) who had to be off-loaded. In another instance, three passengers flew first class from London to New York even though their excursion tickets were found to be invalid, and the flight records were amended. Charged the union: "The figures on the Flight Handling Report for that flight were changed which meant, in effect, that these passengers travelled to New York on our flight without any official record of the fact that they did so."

Continuing Deadlock: All attempts at mediation have failed so far. The union claims that the management from Delhi are doing their best to bring them to heel by using strong-arm tactics. Says Mala Dhondy: "They have no idea of industrial relations in the UK. They think they can treat us like they do their Indian employees back home." The union would like to see de Silva and all 90 workers reinstated before negotiating. It offered to withdraw industrial action in exchange for a return to status quo, so as to start again from scratch, following agreed procedures. It further invited the management quite unsuccessfully to take the dispute to the Arbitration and Conciliation Advisory Service (ACAS) which is a written-in stage of the earlier mutually agreed dispute procedure.

Says da Gama, however: "We have no point of negotiation. Alroy de Silva is an internal matter of discipline." He claims that the strike is politically motivated, pointing to the strikers' criticism of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's "anti-working class legislation".

A curious footnote to this continuing drama is a well-informed source at AI's Bombay office who told INDIA TODAY that there has been no trouble in London after the sacking of 90 persons in early August. According to him the strike has been settled since then without any concessions at all. However, union sources reaffirmed not only a continuing strike situation but increased militancy.

—BONNY MUKHERJEE

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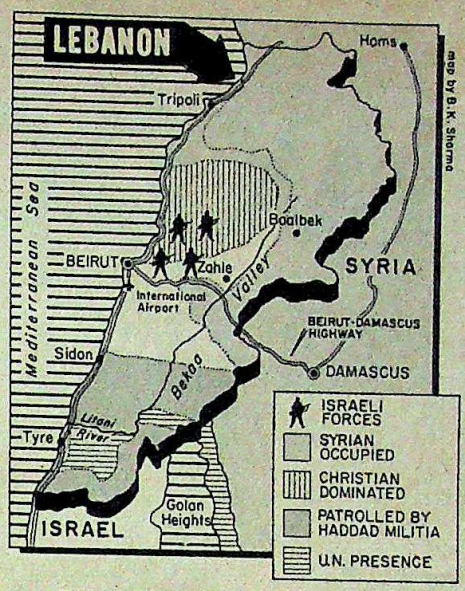
ission
f Mercy

EY called it 'Operation Peace in For 10 weeks, Israel's flail of steel whipped Lebanon and its capital, seeking to stamp out the Palestine n Organisation (PLO). Finally, the ters dispersed to various parts of the rld. Official Lebanese estimates put at over 17,000 dead and 30,000 —this does not take into account the of people buried in mass graves in irut, the former PLO stronghold, and fugee camps.

*ring the bloody experience with the ans were six Indians of a medical m New Delhi's Safdarjang Hospital. ors flew to Damascus in June and last month. Led by Dr Rajendra SI, the team included Dr Jatinder astic surgeon and at 30 the youngest of the mission, orthopaedic surgeon sh Malik, 37, general surgeon Dr h, 37, and Debi Ram, 46, and Jay , theatre technicians. Based in s, the team worked in and around a valley, a PLO stronghold. Corres-*ASOKA RAINA *spoke to the doctors on rn to India.*



E FIRST contact with the reality of
cerated Lebanon burned
elf into their memory.
ans had travelled to the
alley in an ambulance,
from Damascus in the
rs of the morning, not
for even a first cup of tea.
neared the fighting zone,
forward hospitals of
d Bir-Ilyas, the sound of
n the hills 3 km away
y—and the doctors saw
oward them a stretcher
a PLO commando. On it lay a girl
ur years old, gasping for breath.
es drenched with blood.
n Saxena felt for the girl's pulse he
ne; her head had been nearly
by shell shrapnel. The team leader
esitate: he stooped, cradled her
his arms, blood staining his clothes
and carried her to the operation
wo hours later the team emerged.
that the prompt operation would
girls' life. Said Nath: "Our very
act established a lasting rapport
alestinian doctors. The act of pick-
child was greatly appreciated."

Destruction: The sounds and sights of the battlefield soon became a part of their lives. The black clouds that floated away after Israeli bombs hit houses and entrenchments, the incessant clatter of guns, and the moans and screams of the wounded and the dying—these became the backdrop to their work. Says Malik: "The roads were pock-marked with big craters as we weaved through on our way to the front, the buildings were charred black and at one place we saw stacks of destroyed cars. When we saw the casualties, mostly civilian, it took some time to adjust. The closest we had come to such badly mauled bodies were in the traffic accidents of New Delhi."

(From left) Dua, Nath, Malik and Saxena: good Samaritans

The procession of casualties was constant. On many occasions, when the shelling and bombing was particularly fierce, they handled between 60 and 100 bleeding human beings: bullets in the head and the limbs, bodies which had become pincushions for shrapnel, bodies with bones splintered in explosions. The worst sights were the burns caused by phosphorus bombs and those caused by what one doctor calls the "never ending crescendo of cluster bombs" which are quite literally, a shower of death, and are prohibited under the Geneva Convention.

The civilian casualties outnumbered the PLO's considerably, and this the doctors attributed to the PLO style of spreading their soldiers out so that not more than one man was in a room when bombs struck. Says Malik: "The sound of explosions was the signal to move. While everyone else moved away from the target area, we moved towards them: that black mushroom in the distance became our beacon. The ambulance with its blaring siren and the symbol of the Red Crescent—the Muslim equivalent of the Red Cross—barrelled down the roads at nerve-racking speeds." "We were nervous in the beginning," says Nath, "but we got used to it."

The doctors operated in makeshift theatres and there were times when they felt that their number, too, was up, confronted as they were with the horrors of war. Especially in the hospitals at Homs, Balbek and Bir-Ilyas there seemed to be a never-ending queue of casualties. Yet morale was high: the Palestinians, unable to talk except through an interpreter, would raise their hands high in the air, two fingers in the 'V' for victory sign.

The Indians made several attempts to cross the Israeli barrier to West Beirut but failed. The PLO always managed to get its seriously wounded to Balbek and to Jafa Hospital in Damascus. These wounded spoke of the devastation of a once beautiful city. The one saving factor was the plentiful supply of drugs. Says Saxena: "Blood, the most important thing, was freely available. When we asked for five bottles, we got eight. We must have used up nearly 2·5 lakh c.c."

Scanty Rest: All through their stay, the doctors had hardly any breathing space. A little rest became possible when a Bulgarian team of doctors arrived, and the Indians could relax at their hotel in Damascus, the Al-Jalal. Said Malik: "Whatever time we got to relax in, we either swam or saw a film through a video recorder." But the rest would be quickly over and then it was back to the front and the dead and the wounded.

The first week of August arrived, and it was time to leave. When the doctors made their final run into the Bekaa valley, their Palestinian colleagues and their patients were reluctant to let them go. In particular, a young nurse Iman, 20, and Abu Khalid, 48, a theatre technician who had been with them all the time, broke into tears. Iman's parting words summed up both the Palestinian struggle for their homeland and their gratitude for the doctors who had come thousands of miles to heal and save: "Next time, *Inshah Allah*, we will meet on our homeland."

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How to turn black into white

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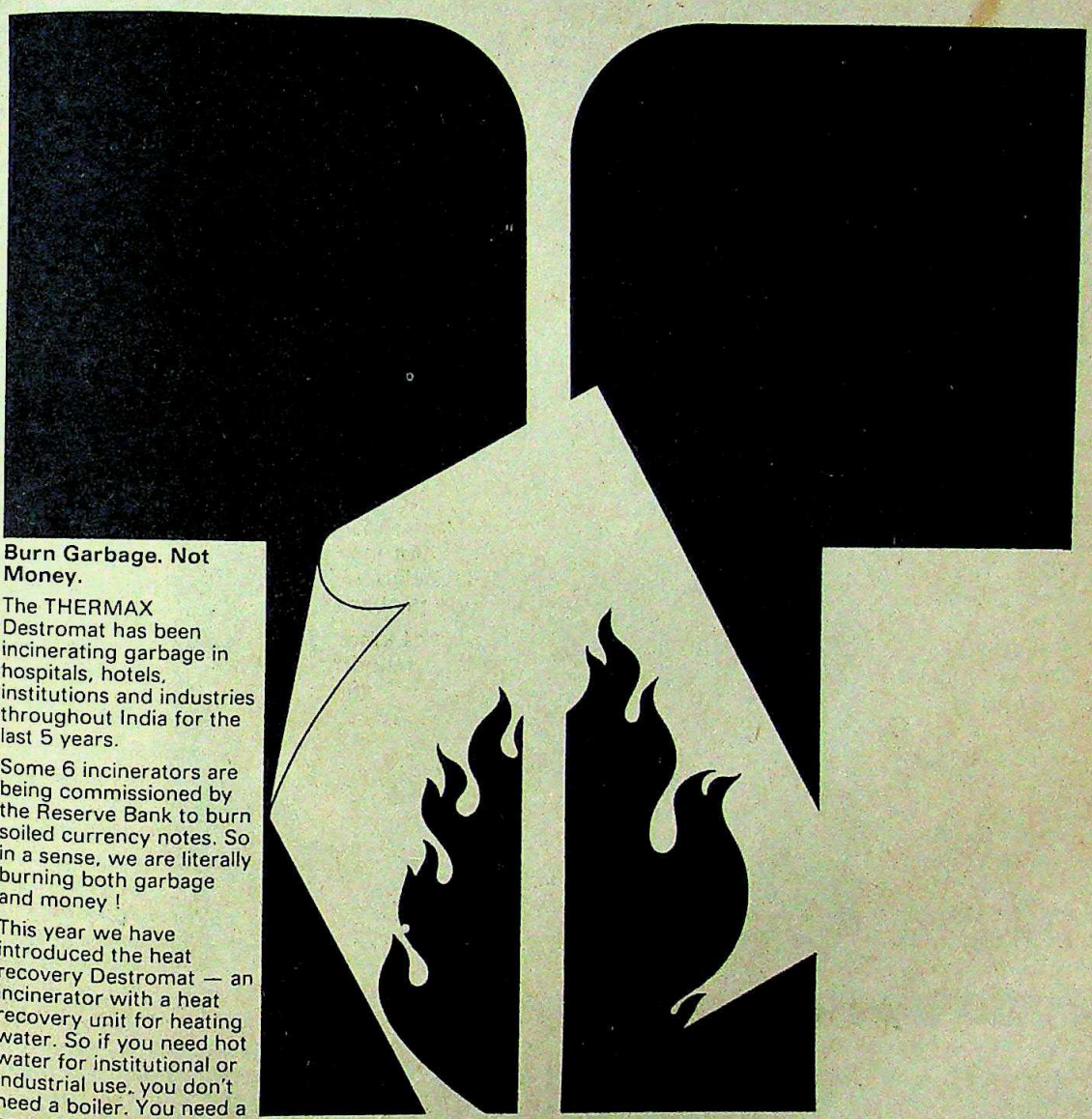

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DIPLOMACY

Comrades In Arms

FOR A week from Monday, September 20, Indira Gandhi will be in the Soviet Union on her longest visit to that country as prime minister. A great deal of quiet preparation has gone into the journey which will be watched closely by many governments in the world, particularly in Washington, Beijing and Islamabad. Mrs Gandhi has reviewed Indo-Soviet relations in the last two weeks not only with the Minister for External Affairs Narasimha Rao, Foreign Secretary Rasgotra and other foreign office men, but also with her special foreign affairs aide, G. Parthasarathy whom she is taking along to Moscow for the first time. Reports indicate that Mrs Gandhi sees her present Moscow visit in a much broader perspective than in the past, relating the future thrusts of Indo-Soviet relations to India's changing relationships with Pakistan, China and the United States.

Officials in New Delhi are keeping a studied silence on the expected outcome of Mrs Gandhi's mission to Moscow. In the capital's diplomatic grapevines, speculation varies from unquiet optimism to disquieting pessimism. Unlike the prime minister's US visit in July, the Moscow visit has not inspired colourful media speculation. Everyone knows that Indo-Soviet friendship is unbreakable—like one of those traditional Indian marriages which become stronger as they spend their romance and passion.

It will not be surprising, however, if Mrs Gandhi's talks with President Leonid Brezhnev and his colleagues produce some startling results in terms of further strengthening the Indo-Soviet connection. Three factors argue in that direction. First, the aging and not-so-well Brezhnev, in the twilight of his leadership career, would like to produce some dramatic success of Soviet foreign policy. Secondly, Mrs Gandhi, having taken 31 months after her return to power to make up her mind to go to Moscow, will probably try her best to make it a success. Thirdly, taking advantage of an early collapse of the euphoria created by Mrs Gandhi's journey to the US, the Soviet leaders would like to demonstrate how different a power the USSR is, and how fruitful its friendship can be for a developing country like India.

Brezhnev with Mrs Gandhi during his 1980 visit: tested relationship

Afghan Issue: In the last two-and-a-half years, the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan has cast a pall over the political relationship between Moscow and New Delhi. The year 1980 brought Gromyko as well as President Brezhnev to India, but talks between them and Mrs Gandhi only showed that the differences over Afghanistan could not be easily bridged. When Brezhnev was in New Delhi for three days in December 1980, both the then President Neelam Sanjiva Reddy and Mrs Gandhi tried to persuade him to pull out Soviet troops from Afghanistan as soon as practicable. Brezhnev politely turned down the Indian plea, and in his speech to Members of Parliament, firmly and categorically declared that Russian troops would not be withdrawn until Pakistan came to friendly terms with Afghanistan.

Observers in New Delhi do not expect Brezhnev to shock Indira Gandhi with the dramatic disclosure of plans to withdraw Soviet troops from Afghanistan. However, efforts are going on at various levels to find a political solution to the Afghan problem. A second round of talks between Pakistan and Afghanistan under UN auspices is scheduled to take place before the end of 1982. Iran will monitor these talks as it did the first round in Geneva. The Reagan Administration, too, has been suggesting "face-saving" devices to the Kremlin. One device mooted in August was that Mohammed Zahir Shah, Afghanistan's former king, be invited to head a republican regime in Kabul with a broad-based government which would include Mujahideen as well as representatives of the rebel groups, and pledge to remain friendly towards the USSR. According to a report printed in the *New Republic*, liberal magazine in Washington, the Soviet Union's reaction to the American suggestion was —"ummm, we'll think about it".

Another straw in the wind is the recent reiteration by President Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan of his desire to improve Islamabad's relations with "our neighbour, the Soviet Union". Afghanistan was among the issues Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Niaz Naik discussed with Soviet officials in Moscow in July. Zia-ul-Haq's desire to improve relations with Moscow could be his reaction to an improvement in India's relations with the US as a result of Mrs Gandhi's talks with President Ronald Reagan.

Amicable Possibilities: In any case, when Mrs Gandhi and Brezhnev discuss Afghanistan, they will not be talking from opposite sides of the aisle as they found themselves doing in December 1980. The Soviet leader will perhaps express his government's willingness to pull out troops from Afghanistan and urge the prime minister to do what she can to nudge Pakistan to negotiate the modalities with Kabul.

Neither Brezhnev nor Indira Gandhi have allowed the Soviet-Indian relationship to decline as a result of differences over Afghanistan. The relationship has in fact grown further in the last 31 months—most conspicuously in the field of defence. During this period India has concluded a massive defence collaboration with the USSR involving the procurement of Rs 1,280 crore worth of arms and technology. For the credit supplied by the Soviet Government, India has got highly favourable terms—repayment in rupees over 17 years at 2·5 per cent interest. In contrast, Pakistan could get $400 million worth of military assistance from the

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er cent interest repayable in dollars in 14 years. The with Moscow enabled India to build under licence two major ons systems as part of the 10 to 15-year plans to modernize the d forces—the MiG-23 bomber as a successor to the MiG-21 and specified number of T-72 tanks to succeed the Vijayanta.

During the Brezhnev visit in December 1980, the Soviets offered credits totalling 522 million roubles (Rs 653 crore) for various opment projects. Specific projects to be undertaken were ssed at the January 1981 meeting of the Indo-Soviet Joint mission presided over by Ivan Arkhipov, a deputy prime ter. In November, the Soviets agreed to participate in a big n the construction of the Vizag steel plant, contributing Rs crore worth of equipment, technology and services out of the estimated cost of Rs 3,000 crore. Several other collaborative es emerged including the construction of two large opencast in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, several big power plants and re exploration of oil.

WHEN in October 1981 a Planning Commission team visited Moscow, the Soviets said they would be interested to enter into long-term deals with India to buy in bulk products of r-intensive industries—a sop for creating mass employment. uary 1982, the Soviets actually concluded a deal to buy 200 n metres of Indian textiles, and awed Indians with a promise

Venkataraman told the Lok Sabha that India was in the process of negotiating Soviet assistance in defence forces modernization plans extending over 10–15 years.

Big Leap: Some startling deals are likely to be concluded in this field during Mrs Gandhi's visit. Brezhnev is expected to offer to help India make a qualitative big leap forward in defence modernization. Brezhnev will probably offer India the high technology of the latest T-72 tank and MiG-27 so that India's defence modernization can keep pace with China's. The T-72 tank is now in service with Soviet military formations in Eastern Europe. The MiG-27, together with the MiG-23, should give India a definite edge over Pakistan's 40 F-16s, all of which may not even be delivered to Islamabad by the US Government.

The Soviets would like to see India build stronger relations with Western Europe rather than the United States in view of their own foreign policy priority to accelerate the process of "detachment" of Europe from America. However, Brezhnev understands the compulsions of India's wooing of the US: in any case, the Soviets cannot meet India's hard currency needs nor supply high technology for the sophisticated areas of Indian development such as offshore drilling for oil. But Brezhnev will certainly try to dissuade Mrs Gandhi from buying arms from America. "Why spend valuable hard currency to buy arms when we can give you everything you need?" he asked the prime minister in December 1980. Reports that India is negotiating

"The Soviets would like to see India build stronger relations with Western Europe rather than the United States in view of their own foreign policy priority to accelerate the process of "detachment" of Europe from America. However, Brezhnev understands the compulsions of India's wooing of the US; in any case the Soviets cannot meet India's hard currency needs nor supply high technology."

y as much as 500 million metres each year for 20 years if a ally satisfactory agreement could be reached. Some of these will be clinched during Mrs Gandhi's visit. In fact, all the dwork will be completed before she arrives in Moscow. This e done at the eighth meeting of the joint commission in Moscow which Narasimha Rao will preside.

For two years and more, Mrs Gandhi kept political talks en India and the USSR deliberately at a low level. The only g Soviet political leader to visit India in 1981–82 was Vassily etsev, vice-president and politbureau member, who led a Soviet mentary delegation. No cabinet colleague of Mrs Gandhi went USSR. However, she sent Eric Gonsalves of the foreign office scow in May 1981 to keep the Kremlin informed of India's to persuade the Reagan Administration not to sell F-16 ft to Pakistan. Mrs Gandhi herself declined a Soviet invitation t Moscow in August 1981 to participate in Soviet celebrations 10th anniversary of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace and dship.

A sharp contrast with the low-key political intercourse between ow and New Delhi, talks on expanding military relationships ated their relationship in 1980–82. Marshal Orgakov, deputy e minister and army chief, came to India soon after Brezhnev's o follow up the defence collaboration agreements reached at mmit. The limelight of Indo-Soviet relations was, however, by the Soviet Defence Minister Dimitri Ustinov when he o Delhi in March last accompanied by the chiefs of the navy e air force and the deputy chief of the army. Defence collabo- talks were carried a long step further and Defence Minister

$ 1 billion worth of arms purchases from the US have not been officially denied in Delhi. This, according to informed sources, is causing more concern in Moscow than Indian flirting with foreign private capital.

Two irritants to Indo-Soviet relations are the treaty of 1971 and the relationship between Mrs Gandhi and the Indian communists, especially the CPI. The Soviets want relations with India to grow "on the basis" of the treaty; Mrs Gandhi is unwilling to go beyond the treaty's elusive "spirit". The treaty is a totem for the Russians; in India, the best way of keeping it alive is not to talk about it. In any case, the strategic content of the treaty becomes less relevant as India develops relations with Pakistan and China. "Indo-Soviet friendship needs to be rescued from two pathologies," observed a former Indian diplomat who once served in Moscow, "the pathology of the Soviet-American rivalry and the pathology of India-Pakistan enmity."

Mrs Gandhi apparently believes that the CPI's opposition to her domestic policy is a thorn in the side of Indo-Soviet friendship. Many of her zealous partymen go a step further; they hold Moscow responsible for the CPI's "misconduct", and would like their leader to tell Brezhnev tersely that if he cannot change the CPI line, well, he will have to settle for less Indian friendship. Mrs Gandhi will probably raise the issue in her conversation with Brezhnev, but it is doubtful if she will get more than sympathetic silence. For the time being at least, she will have to keep her relations with the CPI separate from India's ties with Moscow if she wishes to make the ties stronger. Indications are that she does so wish; in which case her Moscow visit will probably bring clarity to Indo-Soviet relations which have remained a kind of enigma since 1980, wrapped up in Indian ambivalences.

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FORGERY

Trail Of A Master

LATE last month, when a bearded, curly haired, middle-aged man was escorted under heavy police guard to Betul District, he must surely have experienced a sense of *déjà vu*. For Shriram Soni, 46, Madhya Pradesh's master forger, it was not the first time that he had been re-arrested after escaping from police custody. In a criminal career spanning 20 years, involving the swindling of roughly Rs 17 lakh—Soni has broken out of prison four times, only to be dragged back on each occasion.

His last escapade, in early August, was a case book study of his methods. Soni was arrested in May 1979 on a whole string of charges, some of them arising from his earlier prison breaks. As was routine by then, Soni was brought to Bhopal for trial from Raipur jail, where he was serving time. Officials were exercising every caution, since he had escaped during this journey in the past. When he boarded the Chhattisgarh Express at Bhopal on the night of August 2, he had with him 12 policemen, 10 of them armed. When a friend handed a box of sweets to Soni at Bhopal station, supposedly offerings from a local temple, the guards did not object. On the way, in a strain of religious fervour, Soni gave each of his guards a piece of *prasad*, which they unhesitatingly accepted. When the train reached Amla, 200 km south of Bhopal, at around 3 a.m., a passenger informed some very shocked railway policemen that there were 12 policemen sprawled out in a rather strange manner in one of the coaches. They were admitted to hospital where they recovered 12 hours later. They awoke to hear that their prisoner had fled and they had been suspended.

Soni fled to Jaipur. However, on August 18, the local police arrested him under "suspicious circumstances". He gave his name as Brijmohan Singh Rajput, but an alert officer who disbelieved him, informed the Madhya Pradesh Police, and a week identification was complete.

Says a police official: "He is a mini-Natwarlal, the only difference being that Soni never cheats individuals—only the Government." Taken together with his ability to forge signatures perfectly, Soni's *modus operandi* involves the minimum of risk.

The Hoshangabad-born Soni, son of a goldsmith, matriculated from Khandwa in south-west Madhya Pradesh. He joined the Government of India's Food Department in 1957 as a clerk and was later transferred to Ujjain where he studied alongside to acquire a B.A. and then an M.A. degree.

The Beginning: He quit in 1962 and took up a job with the state Government's Agriculture Department at Bhopal, from where he began his sensational, often hilarious career. Having worked in the government for five years, he had learnt its procedures well. Every government department, for salaries and contingencies—like purchases—prepares a voucher which is signed by an authorised officer and sent to the treasury. There, the department's budget allotment is checked and a token is given. This token is encashable at the State Bank of India as soon as the treasury sends the voucher there.

According to a police official, Soni invariably prepared vouchers in the name of the Agriculture Department since its funds are immense and chances of immediate detection few. Also, in the beginning, Soni was helped along by his brother-in-law who was an employee at the treasury in Bhopal.

In 1962, Soni prepared three vouchers of gradually escalating amounts—for Rs 15,000, Rs 30,000 and Rs 45,000. Someone in the accounts department apparently slipped up because these forgeries were not discovered until four years later, by which time Soni had quit the Agriculture Department.

Shriram Soni: smooth operator

Arrest and Escape: Soni was finally arrested in early 1967, released on bail, but was back in jail when the bail was withdrawn the following year. For three years he and his remarkable talent remained behind bars in Bhopal while his case was fought in court. But in 1971, he feigned illness, managed to get admitted to the local Hamidia Hospital, and escaped through a toilet ventilator while his police escort waited patiently outside.

Soni, married, with three children, made his way to Raipur and using the same *modus operandi*, perpetrated his most famous fraud. In 1972, he first forged a voucher to withdraw Rs 1.9 lakh. When that worked, he made out another for Rs 13 lakh—again with complete success.

He proceeded to Nagpur, where he has several relatives, to indulge himself in his two self-confessed weaknesses—women and wine. But in the wake of the considerable publicity his Raipur effort had received, the Madhya Pradesh Police worked overtime, traced him to Nagpur and had him behind bars within a month.

Convicted: In August 1972, he w convicted for his first three forgeries Bhopal and received a total sentence 12 years. Four years later, still in jail, he w convicted again of his 1967 offence wh had led to his first arrest. This time received a sentence of 42 years on nearly charges! He went in appeal against it and court directed that his sentences were to concurrently, the maximum for five year

In 1976, he was transferred to Raipur jail and in the following year he w brought to Bhopal in connection with a ther trial. On the train back to Raipur fr Bhopal, Soni gave the slip to his four po escorts at a railway junction 90 km sout Bhopal. He fled to Nagpur, but luck deser him and within days he was back behind b in Raipur.

But apparently, Soni's appetite breaking out was not lost. In 1978, he brought to Bhopal again, and in an alm repetitive situation, he br away from his four police gua at Ghoda Dongri while train was heading for Raj

Soni proceeded Bombay to Hyderabad, w he planned another of his usual crimes. But this time made the mistake of writin an accomplice in Bhopal, was then being interrog about Soni's whereabouts, led the police to him. Wi weeks, Soni was back in Bh Central Jail.

Relentless Forger: January 1979, he made fri with four petty thieves, hatched an outrageous scheme. With assistance, he forged five vouchers for a of Rs 11 lakh while still in his cell. He wa his accomplices to encash them at a time when they were released on But greed overcame caution and on them proceeded to encash the entire at one go. The cashier took one look a tattered clothes, his briefcase that cou hold the booty and noticed the fact while this was supposed to be governm money, there was no police escort. The failed and that very day the would-be lionaires were back with the law.

After his latest breakout and re last month, Soni now faces the likelih a much stiffer sentence. He has been cha under Section 328 of the Indian Penal C which deals with drugging with an int commit an offence, and could earn h sentence of up to 10 years plus fine. A police officer puts it: "The poor fellow never had enough time to spend his mo

—SREEKANT KHAND

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INDIAN NAVY

Making Waves

PICTURES BY BHAWAN SINGH

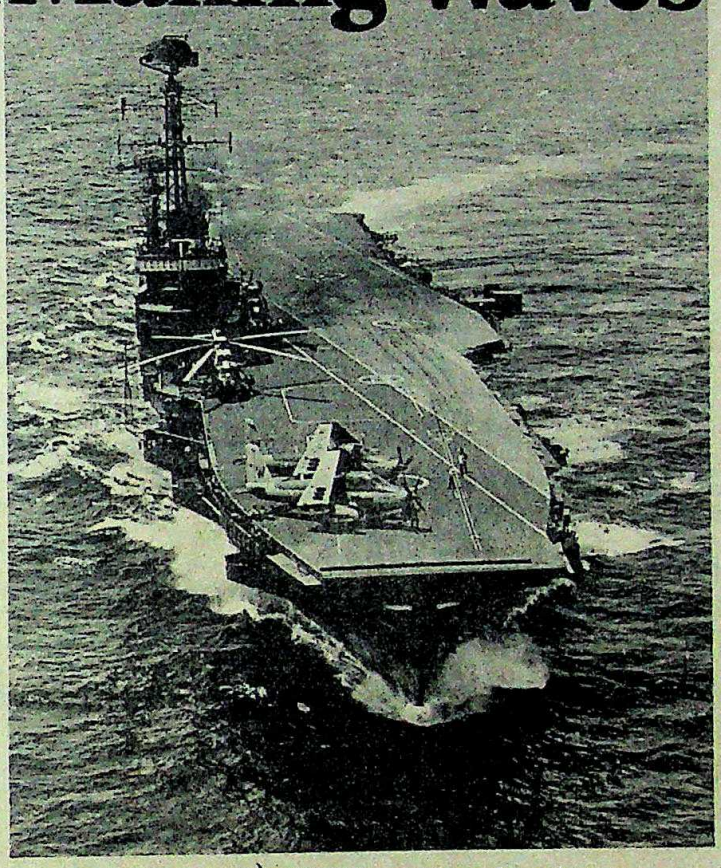
"The maritime interests of country are growing rapidly. The increasing economic to exploit the ocean in the offshore areas and up seabed and the conti- growth of our merchant and fishing fleet, the res- lity of the Navy has manifold. Recent develop- in the Indian Ocean and ghbourhood also pose new ges to the Navy. The ment is therefore com- to a balanced growth of vy with adequate coastal e, ocean-going and under- capabilities . . . ."

Annual Report* 1981-82, *Ministry of Defence

CONCEALED, inevitably, in all the high-sounding bureaucratese lurks a catch. In this particular case, lain of the piece is the "balanced growth" and ying interpretations de- g on which office in Block is doing the inter- g. Nothing would seem to te this more boldly than rent tug-of-war over the ition of Harrier VTOL jets e Navy's aircraft carrier, *Vikrant*. The Navy's idea alanced growth" in the ingly tense security en- ent translates into at ne squadron, or 16 Harriers, lined up *Vikrant*'s flight deck.

he Defence Ministry, convinced by powerful lobbying by the Air Force, ctioned eight Harriers of which two training aircraft. The decision to buy ra Harriers was in cold storage for a while till the Falkland War came Armed with the lessons apparent in uth Atlantic conflict, which was essen- a naval success, the Navy has rejoined ttle for extra Harriers—so far, without success.

Stubborn Contest: The major barrier is, urse, the Air Force which has long yed an obsession to confine all aircraft IAF's hangars. In this case, having ingly conceded the need for eight rs, they have since stubbornly contest- Navy's bid for more on the plea that Harriers are more than adequate since avy will play a limited role in any able conflict. The unspoken argument, urse, is that the money for the extra rs will be better utilised for argument-



An aerial view of the Vikrant: key role to play

ing their own impending acquisition of Mirage 2000s.

Though just another example of rampant inter-service rivalry, its cost in both time and money cannot be ignored. For one, it has succeeded in stalling the Harrier decision for well over a year and if a decision to buy the extra aircraft is finally taken, India will find itself at the back of the queue instead of right in front. Secondly, it will entail paying out extra money in escalation clauses, to the tune of nearly 15 per cent a year. According to the agreement signed for the original eight Harriers, the price tag per aircraft works out to Rs 9·5 crore. The escalation clause will raise that to Rs 13 crore per aircraft after a year.

The Vikrant, the country's only carrier, has just emerged from an expensive and comprehensive overhaul with a new 10-year lease of life; and just six Harriers on deck radically increases her vulnerability. And if Falkland proved one thing, it was that asking a seaborne task force to operate without its own integral or "organic" air support is like asking the army to fight a war without tanks.

Pakistan, the perennial bogey across the border, already has in its armoury the deadly Exocet missile which created such havoc among the British task force in the Falklands. In the near future, Pakistan will have a missile capability that includes surface-to-surface, air-to-surface and subsurface to surface potential. Without an integral air component at sea, the Indian fleet will be sitting ducks for the PAF's F-16s. In a missile environment, unless reaction time is registered in minutes, the Navy's survival ratio will be dangerously low.

Convincing Display: Last month, the *Vikrant* gave an awe-inspiring display of its punch and instant deployment capability during an exercise which INDIA TODAY was permitted to witness exclusively. In extremely rough and rainy weather which reduced visibility considerably, the *Vikrant* along with two Leander class frigates, outmanoeuvred and outgunned the attacking force which included a Foxtrot class submarine.

This was largely due to the instant deployment capability of the ageing Alize aircraft and Sea King helicopters on board. That deployment time will be considerably reduced with the VTOL Harriers on board; so also the range and punch of the fleet's attack system. At the time of the "attack", the carrier was halfway between Calcutta and the Andamans, a distance of over 560 km from the nearest air base.

If the Air Force, as it has been insisting, had been in control of air defence, it would have taken a dangerously longer time before the "enemy" was detected, messages routed to the nearest air base, fighters scrambled and finally arrived over the target area. The success of the British task force in the Falklands, 5,600 km from the nearest air base at Ascension island, was due in large measure to the air cover provided by the Harriers. Significantly, the Falklands are only 640 km from the Argentinian mainland while India's island territories are located at a distance of over 1,120 km.

Further, the fastest aircraft the IAF will have eventually will be the Mirage 2000s which are single engine aircraft and therefore inoperable over sea. In any event, flying an

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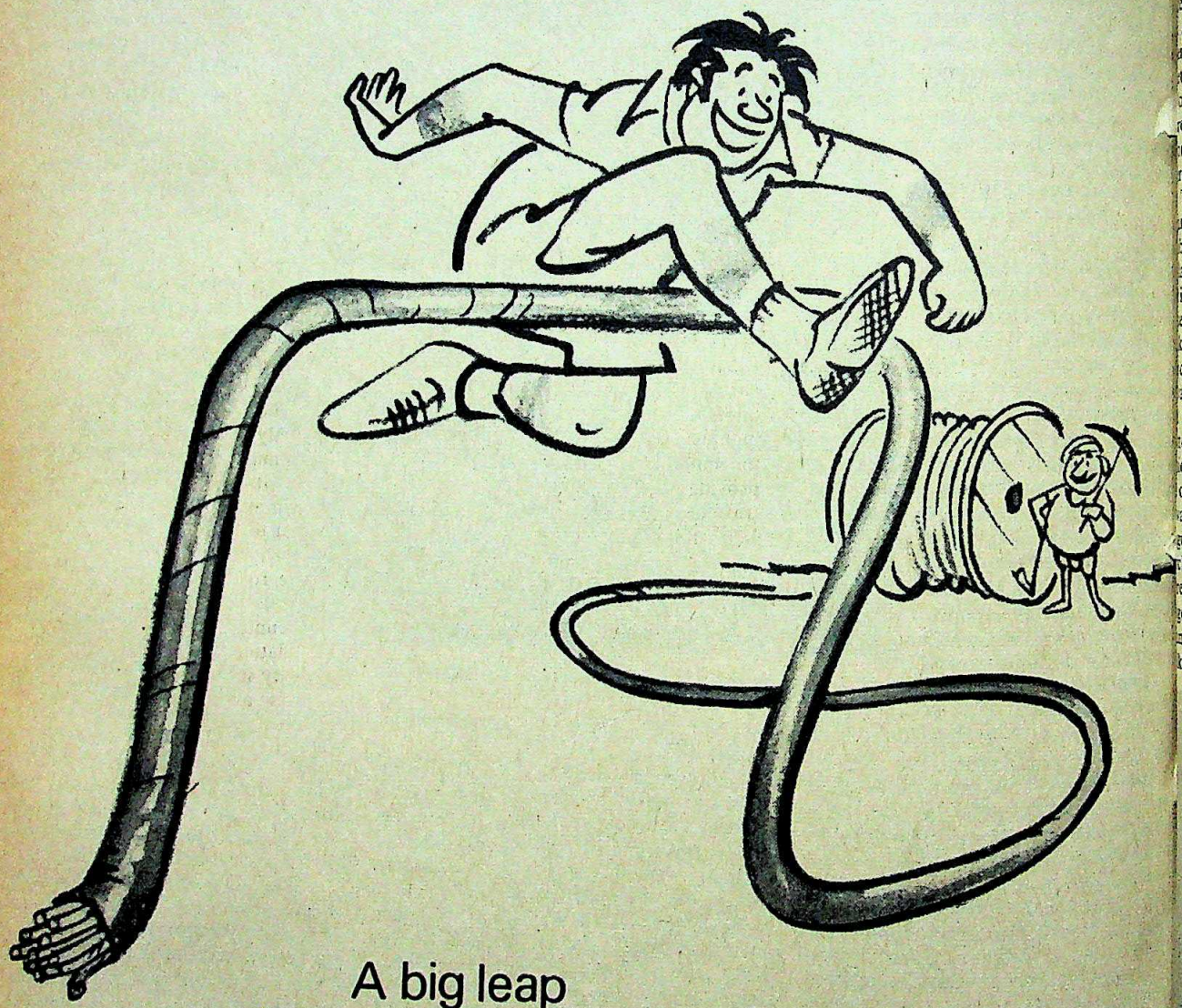

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aft over rough seas in low visibility ther is a highly specialised task with no marks for navigation. The IAF have of the best pilots in the world but ating in a sea environment is vastly ent to operating over land.

THE IAF has also been busy propagating its counter-argument that India's island territories will be better defed by fixed airfields equipped with fighAgain, this appears to be a dangerous ndence. Once the runway is damaged by tration bombs, as happened in the case ort Stanley airfield in the Falklands, the e garrison will be highly vulnerable to r sea strikes and its vital supply lifeline red.

The IAF does have a valid counterment that there is no immediately foreble threat to an island garrison like the amans, which, incidentally, has India's integrated command headed by a naval er. The IAF rightly opines that Pakistan is kely to attack an island 700 miles off the coast of India even if they had the range. al planners, however, insist that the IAF the Defence Ministry is viewing the ter in their traditional blinkered obon with Pakistan and the premise that only threat emanates from Islamabad. al requirements, they argue, have a far ger gestation period than any comparable hases by the Army or Air Force, and efore the scenario must be viewed in a far ger-term perspective and take into acat all unforeseen eventualities like the klands vis-a-vis the British. Though the possible threats they perceive—China, Bangladesh and Indonesia (which originally laid claim to the Andamans but abandoned the claim later)—is hardly valid now, naval strategists see no reason why they should not be say 10 or 15 years ahead. In which case, they feel, it will do no harm to be prepared.

In a war scenario, the only effective way an island garrison can be kept supplied with fuel, food and ammunition is by sea. Till now, the three wars with Pakistan and one with China have been mercifully short affairs. But as armouries on both sides are filled out, it is likely that the next war is bound to be a more protracted one and the Navy's role in keeping supply lines open and blockading enemy ports, as it did with Dacca in 1971, will hardly be a limited one. The eventual surrender of the Falklands was because the Argentinians ran out of supplies which had to be sent by sea and were completely and effectively denied to them by the British task force.

In fact, the Falkland crisis proved conclusively that even waves of shore-based aircraft flown by daring and courageous pilots failed in their objective against the highly mobile units of the task force. In fact, the mobility of a carrier like the *Vikrant* provides for a moving airbase capable of travelling almost 800 km in a single day. In 1971, the *Vikrant*'s aircraft bombed three separate ports on the then East Pakistan coastline. Its mobility also enables it to evade shore-based aircraft since by the time they arrive over the last-sighted position, the ship could be anything between 64 km and 80 km away in any direction.

Escort Role: This would also enable it to play a major shepherding role in the event of a protracted war. If India was desperately short of fuel or ammunition, the only ships which could be requisitioned to bring supplies in would be from India's large merchant fleet of approximately 400 ships. The supply ships, particularly oil tankers, would be sitting ducks without the presence and deterrent factor that an escort like the *Vikrant* would provide.

Air cover for the ships by, say, the IAF would be a contradiction in terms. Conversely, a task force led by the *Vikrant* could, as they did in 1971, totally blockade a port like Dacca and deny the Pakistan forces vital supplies.

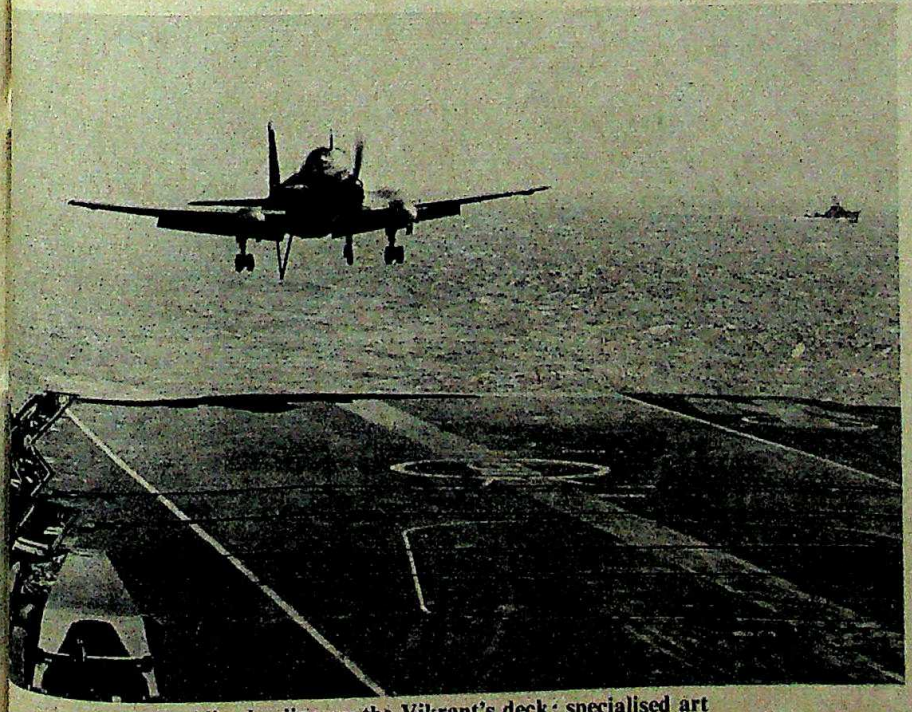
One lesson of the Falkland War that all three service arms seem to agree on, is the necessity for an Early Warning Aircraft like the AWACS. Though an expensive investment, an Airborne Early Warning (AEW) system which the services are trying to convince the Defence Ministry to acquire, would give India a decisive edge, particularly against attacks by aircraft like the F-16s.

The fact that Saudi Arabia might be perfectly willing to loan its AWACS to Pakistan in the event of a future conflict makes its acquisition all the more urgent. Britain must have sorely rued the day they retired their AEW Gannets without waiting for an adequate replacement. The Navy's future role and strategy for the '80s, however, is all the more vital in the context of the country's rapidly-increasing offshore oil installations 120 km from the mainland, its security interests in the Indian Ocean and India's ambitious plans to exploit the Ocean's seabed.

Regional Importance: India has the 12th largest Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the world because of the Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands which translates into an area of roughly 2·2 million square miles under New Delhi's control. The fact that the Indian Ocean is the only ocean to be named after a country is hardly insignificant and underlines the importance of India in the region. In fact, if the map of India is viewed upside down, only then does the strategic importance and the vast expanse of the seas under India's control become evident.

In that context, it seems clear that the Navy's step-sisterly treatment in the matter of defence budget allotments could be a short-sighted policy in the long run. Ever since 1974, the Navy's share of the defence budget has stayed static at around 8 per cent. The purchase of an additional eight Harriers is hardly going to increase that figure by very much and it may signal an intent to rule the waves that lap the Indian coasts.

—DILIP BOBB



An Alize landing on the Vikrant's deck: specialised art

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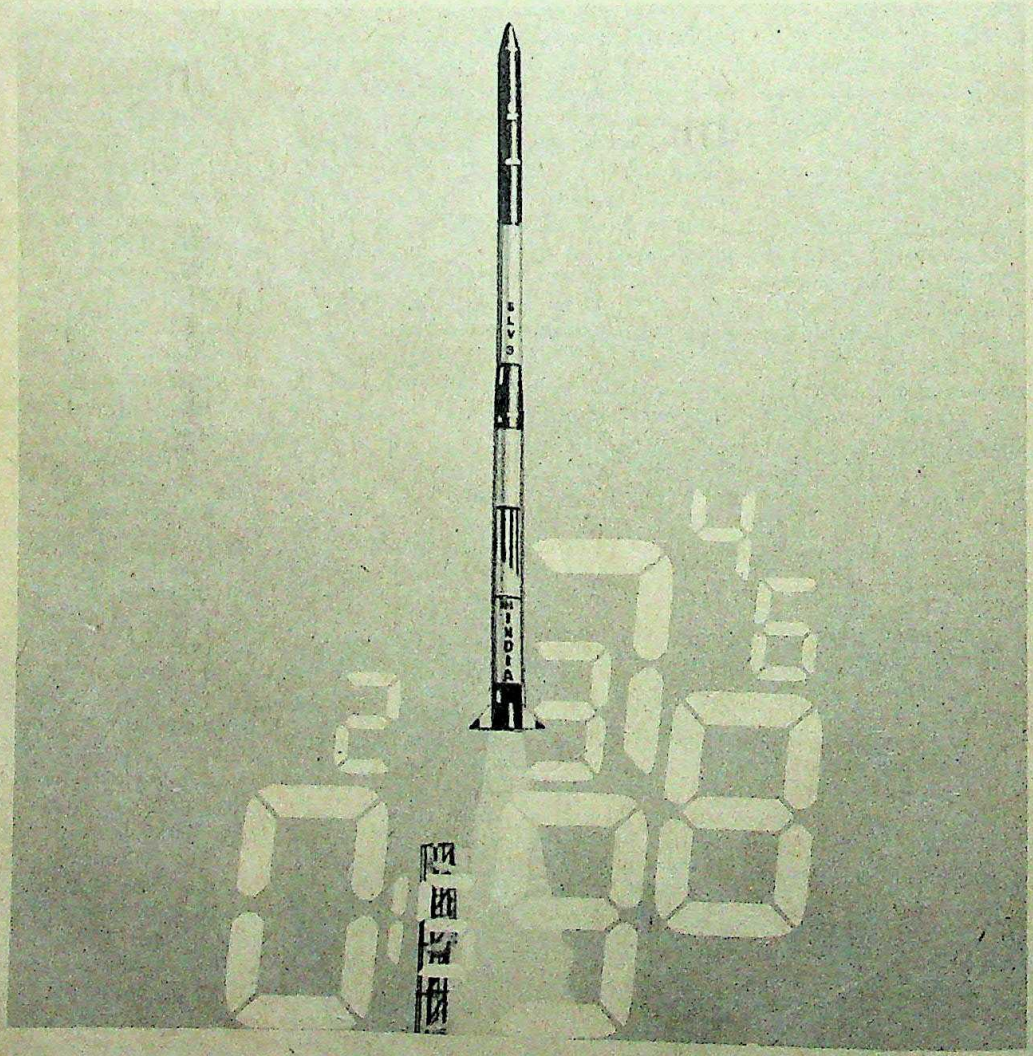

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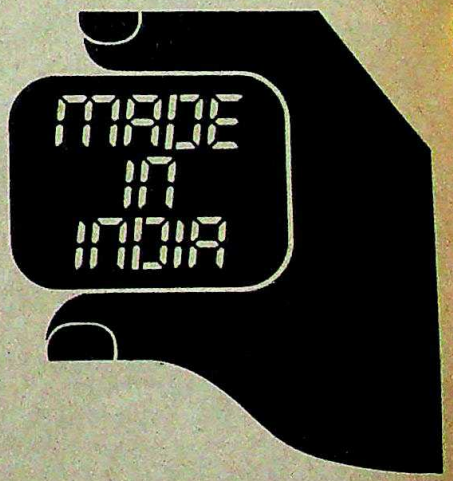

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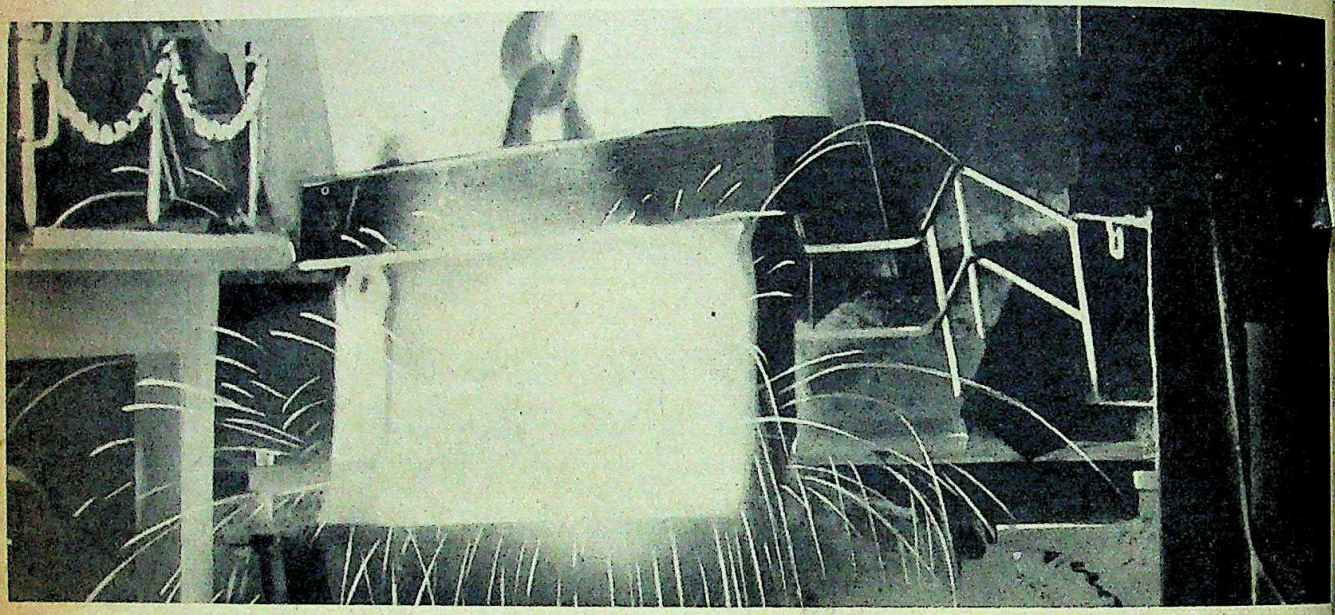

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AT

Fading Fair

HE ONCE colourful annual fair of Tarnetar village in Gujarat has dwindled into a mere commercial Gone is the traditional charm that his one of the most popular fairs in e. The decay in the traditional mela parent last month. Cheap plastic smetics and pornographic material ken the place of intricately embroi- umbrellas, handicraft, rural pro- trinkets, traditional jewellery and The stalls are now packed with of modernization'. Said Ramesh n Ahmedabad businesman who has Tarnetar numerous times: "The s deteriorated into an ugly urban id has lost its rural and colourful here. Earlier, one could buy intrica- stage of matchmaking would follow with the elders sending proposals for marriage.

That is now all in the past. With the passage of time, the Tarnetar fair has lost its importance as a hunting ground for matchmakers. Now, the women have more freedom and don't have to wait for the fair to meet prospective husbands. The old Gujarati saying: "Chalo Tarnetar, bhalso tyan parnetar" (Come to Tarnetar, where you shall find your beloved) strikes a false note.

Urban Influence: The decay of tradition is largely the result of the unchecked flow of urbanite visitors who visit Tarnetar for tourist and photographic reasons. As often happens, contact with city-dwellers has resulted in changes in the village. their ears, necks and arms adorned in exquisite silver jewellery. Although men are conspicuously better dressed than the women, the village belles glow in their natural rustic beauty. In fact, their backless cholis, gaiety and grace is the focus of many a visitor from the city. This attention, however, is not particularly appreciated by the villagers. Armed with cameras of all descriptions, the visitors outnumbered rural folk. Said an irritated villager to two photographers: "Why do you city-dwellers come here to harass us? Please leave us alone." The villagers have good reason to be irked. Cameramen wait around to take pictures of women bathing near the temple. This has become such a nuisance that this year some young villagers stood around the temple to keep enthusiastic photographers at bay. Said Lakman Rabari, 45, a Gondal villager: "Our rich tradition is being killed by these *pathloonwalas* with cameras.".

Villagers dancing the *garba* at Tarnetar: dying traditions

roidery and typical Saurashtra han- s in plenty. Now one can only get plastic toys." With the neglect of inal arts and crafts, the relevance of sta has become more commercial eligious or social.

e three-day fair, held each year in ar village of Surendranagar district, izes the cultural ethos of three Gu- communities—the Bharvadis, Kolis abaris. Village folk avidly looked for- o the fair, which they would attend in their best. They would dance the day to the lively rhythm of cymbals and other musical instru- The fair, held in the precincts of iva temple, celebrates the marriage mythological hero, Arjuna with s Draupadi. Not so long ago, the phere used to be charged with the ent of first meetings between young nd women, as the marriage mood The fair was a convenient selection for prospective couples. The young meet briefly and depart three days aving made their decisions. The next

The fair stalls now concentrate on presenting glimpses of the city. Hindi film songs blare from tape recorders at various stalls, drowning the music of the village belles dancing the traditional *garba* dance. Said Hira, a villager from Tarnetar: "We don't enjoy dancing any more as we are conscious due to numerous city dwellers who even pass comments." Music has been replaced by the deafening sounds of generators that are used to run the giant ferris wheels. Cheap Hindi films are shown at some stalls. More grotesque entertainment is provided by "magic" stalls where children are made to lie down in odd positions to make it look as though their body has been cut into pieces. At other stalls, a noisy toy train and a stuntman on a motorcycle without a silencer add to the cacophony of city sounds in the village fair.

Despite the infiltration by outsiders, the fair still retains some of its old character, thanks to the local village folk, who continue to dress in their traditional finery. Men are still turbaned and dressed in colourful, carefully embroidered jackets,

In an attempt to revive the once famous fair, the Tourism Corporation of Gujarat Limited (TCGL) set up a small tourist village with tarpaulin tents and a few mud huts with thatched roofs this year. They also organised shows of the dying art form, *bhavai* folk drama. Said Swantantra Sekhon, IAS, managing director, TCGL: "We are determined to revive this fair. Just give us time. Next year, we are going to give it a rural touch by organising bullock-cart and horse races." But Haku Shah, winner of Nehru Fellowship award for his work on tribal arts and crafts, warns: "A careful study must be made before attempts to revive the fair are made. Otherwise, it may have adverse effects. The changes, if any, should be gradual, and traditional forms like *bhavai* and *garba* should be encouraged to bring back the richness and flavour of the fair." To combat the cosmetic values that threaten the rich cultural ethos of the fair, a revival seems essential, but whether it will be for the better remains to be seen.

—RAMESH MENON in Tarnetar

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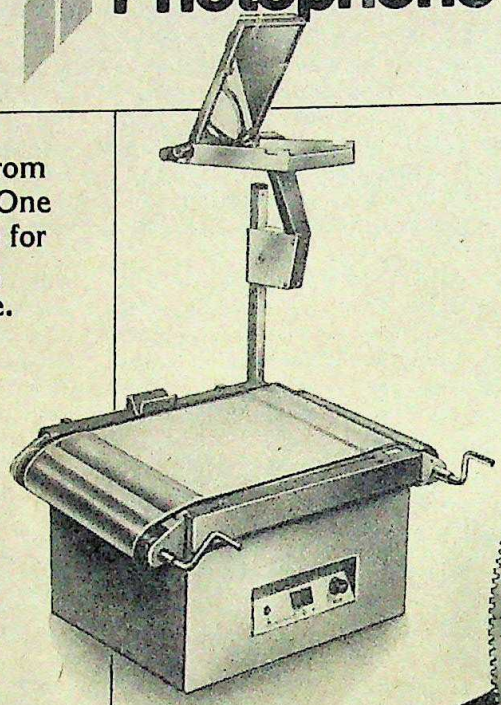

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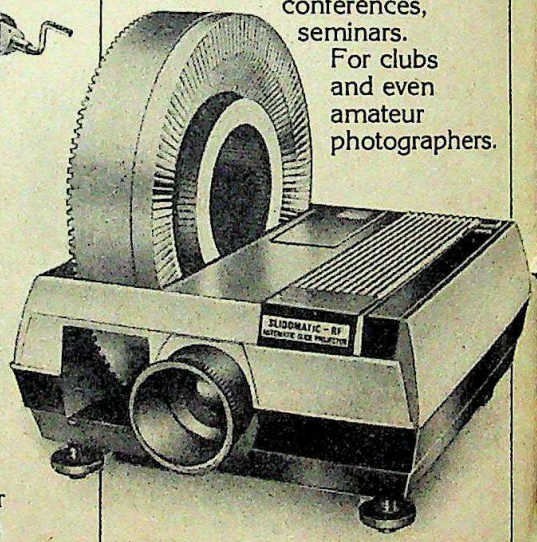

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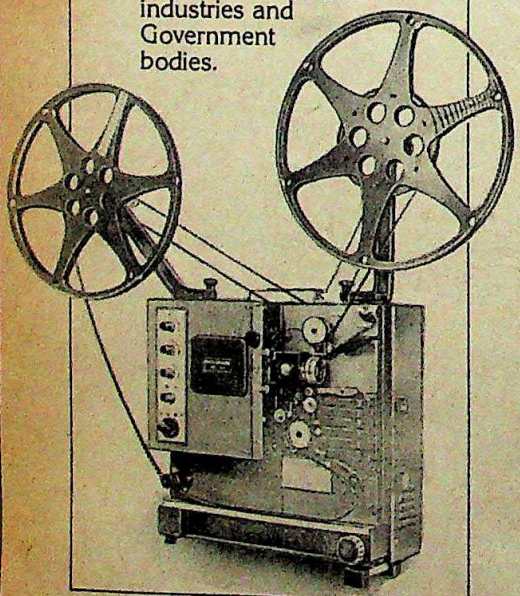

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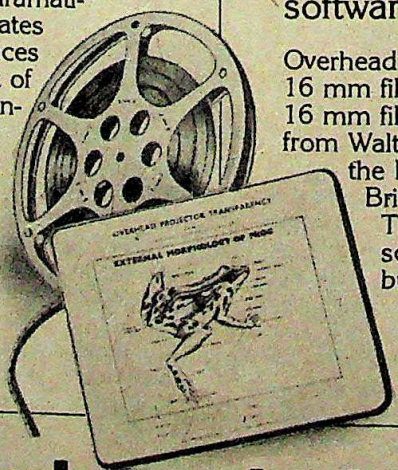

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ANMOHAN SINGH

n Air Of Optimism

R MANMOHAN SINGH, 50 this ht, could well be the youngest ever or of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). g off with an enviable academic —topping the Punjab University in both . and M.A., then heading the lists again nbridge, where he did his Tripos, and getting a D. Phil, from Oxford—he to the RBI with a wealth of experience in nic administration, having been chief nic adviser to the government, secretary Department of Economic Affairs, and fortnight member-secretary of the g Commission.

ngh can best be described as a non-aire mildly left-of-centre eco- whose "faith in the Indian y" led him to join issue in 1973 bert McNamara, then president World Bank, for saying that the economy would collapse in six of the oil crisis. But he proved assingly wrong in 1979, in his that the Charan Singh budget not cause inflation, when what resulted was a devastating ise.

usiness Editor T.N. NINAN inter- him in Delhi last fortnight, on of his moving to Bombay to harge of the Reserve Bank. rs:

Is there a recession?

There is no doubt that a few rs of industry are faced with demand. But the figures for t six months of 1982 show that there n overall industrial growth of 6 per o one cannot say that our industrial y is suffering from a general state of n.

ere are specific reasons for the prob- ced by a few individual industries— ctricity boards do not seem to have te resources and that affects orders gs like aluminium; the railways have ed their efficiency, so there is less e to expand trucking services. But a eneral reason for the problem is that n had encouraged people to build up ries. Then, with price expectations downward in the wake of a successful of inflation in the second half of 2, the incentive disappeared, and in- levels started getting reduced. This ated downstream problems, but only ary ones.

What about the problem of dumping by foreign suppliers? There are well-documented cases of some domestic industries being hit by this.

A. Dumping is a marginal problem and can be taken care of easily if the problem exists. After all, the Government is not interested in having domestic capacity lie idle while imports go up. We can use both tariff and import controls to deal with problems of dumping. Thus in the Indian context, dumping of cheap imported goods cannot give rise to a general recession.

Q. *Is credit a problem?*

A. The latest available figures show that in recent weeks the supply of credit has not been a major problem. Banks have adequate resources to meet additional demands for credit. However, there are indications that the rate of growth of demand for bank credit has decelerated. Probably this is an indication of reduced demand for inventories in an environment of relatively stable prices.

HARI OM GULATI

Singh: prophesying growth

Q. *The price index has been going up quite rapidly. Do you think we are now in for a fresh bout of inflation?*

A. In Indian conditions, one can never take price stability for granted because the economy is still considerably dependent on the behaviour of rains, and agricultural prices often set the pace for other prices. This year the monsoon has been initially deficient and delayed, and at one stage we were worried about its effects on the price situation. But the subsequent improvement in the rainfall situation indicates that the problem can be controlled and there is no danger of an inflationary spiral being set in motion.

Q. *What do you think of the recent liberalisations in the Government's economic policy?*

A. Well, as a civil servant I can't sit in judgement on government policy. But I think we are moving in the right direction. Some of the old controls were either not effective, or were proving counter-productive. For instance, I don't think any social objective is served by freezing production capacity or by perpetuating a situation of under-utilisation of capacity in commodities and products which the country needs in greater abundance. If somebody has the capacity to produce something that the country needs, why stop him, particularly if it does not hurt small-scale industry. In any case, all firms need to grow in order to stay healthy and to absorb new technologies without creating problems of unemployment for their existing labour force. This is an organic law.

Q. *That sounds quite different from what the Government used to say earlier—say 10 years ago. How do you explain this change towards liberalisation?*

A. The basic objectives of policy are still the same as earlier—that is to combine both faster growth and greater social justice. What has changed are the tactics, the instruments of control. The economy has grown over the last 30 years, and has become too large and complex for the old instruments of control to be fully effective. If a control cannot be worked effectively, or causes harassment, or helps generate black money, it must go. You can't eliminate controls altogether in an economy like ours, for social gain rather than private profit remains the overriding consideration in our planning. We must look at controls in functional terms, and do away with those that are not effective and are shown not to be serving any worthwhile social objective.

Q. *Would you favour a further shift in favour of the private sector, as against the public sector?*

A. We don't operate in a vacuum. The election manifesto of every political party, even that of the BJP, now says that the public sector should occupy the commanding heights of the economy. I think there is a broad national consensus on this. Planning is a political process, and must take account of this. It may be that in certain areas the private sector is more efficient, but given the national consensus in favour of giving the commanding heights of the economy to the public sector, this is only a theoretical option. At the same time, there is considerable and expanding scope for private initia-

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tive and enterprise in our mixed economy.

Q. ***Coming to the IMF loan, do you think we are getting caught in a debt trap and will face a problem in repaying the loan?***

A. The debt burden does worry me, but I do not think it is inevitable that we are caught in a debt trap. Considering the magnitude of the trade gap, the limited scope for reducing imports and increasing exports in the short run, the alternative to the IMF loan was a sharp cutback on investment or a harsh squeeze on consumption. Thus the loan was a necessity and it has enhanced our ability to maintain the integrity of our development programmes despite a very unfavourable international environment.

The debt burden need not become onerous if we make proper use of the money which we have got from the IMF for structural adjustment. Structural adjustment implies both reduced dependence on imported supplies of goods which can be produced in our economy at reasonable cost as well as a vigorous export promotion effort. So far, our oil programme is going well—in fact, better than expected—and so is the coal programme. The only major weak link in the adjustment programme is exports, because we are trying to sell in a difficult world trading environment. But last year was better than 1980–81, since exports in volume terms went up by 7 per cent. I can't say repaying the IMF loan will not be a problem: but if we manage our economy well we need not get into a debt trap.

Q. ***Do you think we can achieve faster economic growth than we have enjoyed so far?***

A. I think it is both essential as well as feasible to plan for faster growth. I believe we are moving in that direction. Before the mid-'70s, we did not add at best more than a million hectares annually to the area under irrigation. In recent years, we have been adding 2 to 2.5 million hectares annually to the irrigation potential. In power generation also, even though our performance is not in line with plan targets, we are creating far more fresh capacity than ever before. These are quantum changes and they are bound to make some difference to the country's growth rate. I have a strong feeling that we are moving away from what my friend Raj Krishna once, in a state of despair, described as the Hindu rate of growth of 3·5 per cent!

Q. ***What do you see as your major tasks in the Reserve Bank?***

A. The Reserve Bank has been assigned an important role in advising the Government regarding the macro-economic management of our economy, paying due attention to maintenance of both internal and external economic stability. In addition, the Reserve Bank has to provide the leadership to the Indian banking system in the area of development banking, in ensuring that bank credit helps to promote both growth and equity and in improving customer services. In all these areas, there is considerable scope for fresh initiatives.

Q. ***How do you propose to improve customer services?***

A. Bank managements have to do a lot of creative thinking on this subject and it will be necessary to seek the active cooperation and involvement of bank staff in this process. We have to increase accountability of the banking system and make this accountability more visible.

I would like the Indian banking system to modernize itself at a faster pace. International banking practices are undergoing rapid changes and we cannot lag behind. I am aware of the public criticism of the working of our banking system. But our banking system has also got a vast reserve of highly educated, dedicated and well motivated young men and women. Our task is to create the proper environment in which these people can give their very best in the service of our country.

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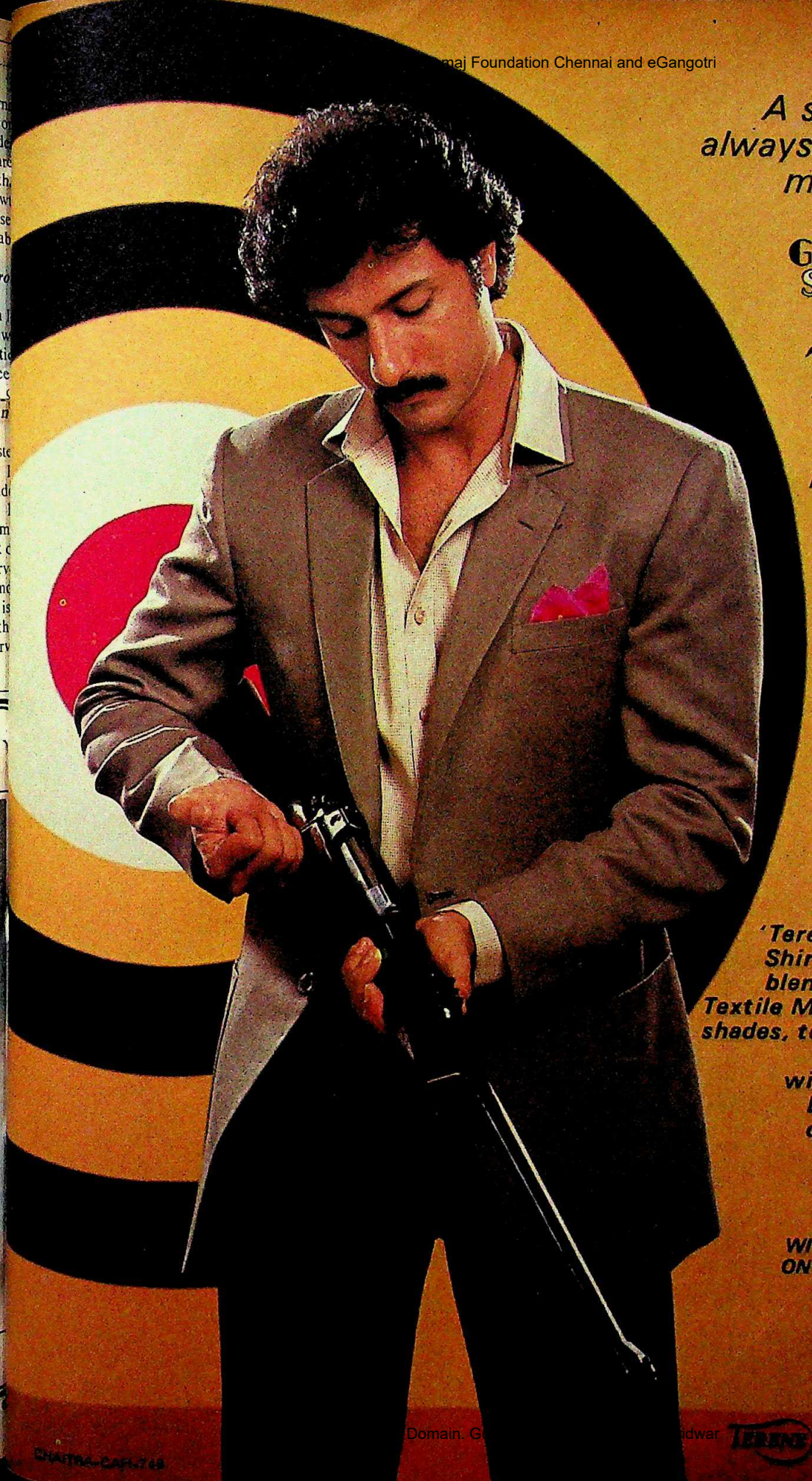

A sense of style always helps a man make his mark

GRAVIERA SUITING GR IN TERENE SETS A MAN APART

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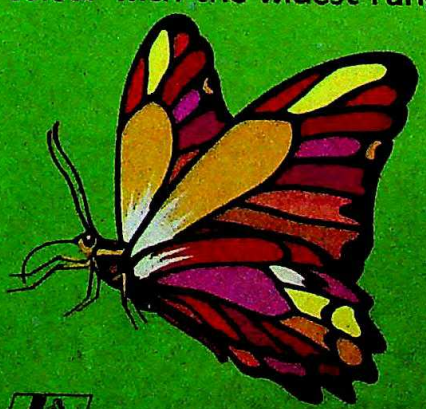

Jenson & Nicholson

Plastic Emulsion, Enamels, Washable Distemper and Cement Paints.

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Perfectly blended for
that perfect pleasure

FIRST TIME IN INDIA
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CIGARETTE SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

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Some of the decade's successful campaigns

RTISING

oming Of Age

HE 13TH Asian Advertising Congress, starting in New Delhi later this month, symbolises the coming of age of Indian advertis- or not only has the industry quadrup- a decade, to an estimated Rs 420 crore ear, it has also grown in profe- lism, skills, variety and sophistication. t one level, consumers across the cou- e increasingly bombarded with high- y media hype—from the village *hatti* njab with its familiar Brooke Bond , to the Andhra tea-shop filled with ingles touting Vicco turmeric cream. another level, the advertising agen- e increasingly switching to sophisti- narket research, "psychographically" g consumer aspirations, computeris- market into finely defined segments ctive use of media, and reaching new of creativity that almost make adver- nto an art form.

yet a third level, a media explosion, lly in the form of new magazines, and ening of new avenues of advertis- ommercial television, for instance, tarted six years ago—have presented fession with new challenges and new unities for practising their increas- ervasive hard sell.

overnment Awareness: Even govern- have succumbed to the wave: "Image the state governments are now a fact the Congress(I) swept the 1980 polls n advertising slogan that cannily the public mood; and staid public outfits now see advertising and mar- ket research as essential inputs: Hindustan Machine Tools (HMT) recently profiled machine tool users in an effort to understand its market, and Maruti Udyog carried out a detailed market survey before deciding on the kind of car that would sell.

Over the last decade, the change of scenario has been little short of revolutionary. Corporate advertising budgets have soared, as success in the market-place is increasingly linked to effective advertising. Promise toothpaste, Nirma washing powder, Liril soap, Reliance textiles, Weston television—all these were new products launched in established fields with the help of large advertising budgets, and all of them succeeded.

Even existing and flourishing entities have had to join the bandwagon. As the economy has opened up and protected semi-monopoly markets become sharply competitive, advertising has become an essential means of plain survival. More than a dozen TV manufacturers have spawned a blaze of advertising, while the computer war was launched with a hot advertising blizzard by International Computers, Delhi Cloth Mills (DCM), Hindustan Computers and a string of software suppliers. Paint companies, chemical manufacturers and even industries like ball-bearings have responded to the end of a suppliers' market by flocking to the ad agencies for major campaigns. Media expert N. Bhaskara Rao estimates that in a number of consumer products, advertising budgets now range between 5 and 15 per cent of sales revenue, with some premium brands of soap going up to 20 per cent.

Persuasive Medium: Through its sustained growth, advertising has become arguably the country's most persuasive communication form, bridging the gap between 14 major linguistic groups and daunting cultural diversities. Over 150 million listeners are fed daily doses of radio jingles, 1.7 million TV sets offer families in the major cities and surrounding towns an enticing range of increasingly slick commercial shorts, and a nation-wide readership approaching 100 million is exposed to a regular blitz of high pressure salesmanship: pushing products, suggesting life-styles, tapping aspirations, catalysing the pursuit of happiness.

Advertising agencies have mushroomed: even ignoring the free-lance agents who put together quickie publicity campaigns for small advertisers, there are now 390 agencies in regular operation. As many as 268 of them, ranging from the giant Hindustan Thompson Associates (HTA)—1981 billing Rs 23.6 crore—to one-man agencies, are registered with the Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society, which monitors the relationship between publishers and advertisers. In addition, a host of unregistered admen have cashed in on the boom in specialised functions: film publicity, hoardings, audio-visual shows, company reporting services, art shops, creative boutiques.

Radio went commercial in 1967, but came into its own only in the mid-1970s, when 28 Vividh Bharati stations began carrying advertising jingles. By 1981, All India Radio was earning Rs 13 crore in advertisement revenue. Doordarshan has done even better starting in 1976, its commercial operations fetched Rs 15 crore last year. And recent policy pronouncements suggest that

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both media will open up even more to advertisers.

Magazine Growth: But the most radical change has come in publishing. In less than a decade, the staid mainline newspapers have seen their thunder stolen by an eye-catching breed of new magazines that created an important new advertising arena, and specific market segments: for executives, the society-conscious, film enthusiasts and geographically specific readerships (the city magazines).

Inevitably, the advertising picture changed. Bhaskara Rao estimates that the share of press advertising fell over the decade from 75 per cent to less than 65 per cent as radio, TV and other forms came into the picture; and within the press, the newspapers lost out to the magazines, the share of the latter rising from 15 to 35 per cent between 1972 and 1981.

The growth of the magazines has also proved a catalyst for more sophisticated advertising, specialised readerships and accurate market positioning. To take but one example, the Raymonds suiting campaign is divided into two distinct parts. One appears in the relatively more general purpose magazines, carrying a fashion guide to the well-dressed male; the other appears only in business magazines, read largely by senior executives, and is both understated and more classy, relying on a romantic canvas portrait to create the impression of a top-notch suiting.

Increasing Sophistication: Willy-nilly the advertising agencies have had to respond to the new challenges, offer new services, ensure value for money spent. "The industry has become increasingly sophisticated and specialised," says Frank Simoes, the kurta-clad advertising star. "Today an advertising product

DAVID OGILVY

Eminence Grise

DAVID OGILVY, 71, is unquestionably the eminence grise *of global advertising. He comes to India later this month, to address the 13th Asian Advertising Congress starting in New Delhi on September 27. This has inevitably become the conference's selling point. Advertisments across the world feature Ogilvy saying: "I loathe flying. But I shall submit myself to this harrowing experience to participate in the 13th Asian Advertising Congress. Because this year's congress is programmed to be one of the most educative for anybody seriously concerned with marketing in Asia."*

To profile the man and his achievements RAMESH CHANDRAN *met him last fortnight at his chateau at Touffou, 240 km south-west of Paris.*

HE CREATED the most famous automobile advertisement of all time: "At 60 miles an hour, the loudest noise in this new Rolls Royce comes from the electric clock." Living in semi-retirement today in a multi-towered, fairy-tale 12th century castle in France, David Ogilvy can look back on an unmatched record of writing advertising copy.

At the entrance to the stylish Paris offices of Ogilvy & Mather (O&M) which he founded and headed for 25 years, is a framed portrait of the legendary advertisement for Hathaway shirts featuring the debonair Baron George Wrangell with the famous eyepatch. Wrangell has handed over the eyepatch Ogilvy gave him 30 years ago to a less dashing successor. But the Hathaway advertisement, which ran for 19 years, has recently been resurrected—in tribute to the talents and ability of "one of the most creative minds of a creative generation".

Social Purposes: Ogilvy refrains from comment on advertising in India, pleading that he has never visited India before. But he feels that advertising can provide an impetus for economic growth in the developing countries. "Advertising is nothing but an instrument which you can use for good purposes or bad. You can't criticise advertising as advertising. It depends on what it is used for."

He emphasises that advertising is increasingly being used for social purposes. "I am positive that in India, where there are so many hellish problems, advertising can play a small part in helping

Ogilvy: an unparalleled career

solve some of those problems by persuading people to try things which they ought to. And here I mention family planning." One of Ogilvy's own campaigns in Puerto Rico illustrate the point. Titled 'Operation Bootstrap', it comprehensively changed Puerto Rico's image from one of squalor and poverty to that of a vibrant healthy state, eventually attracting scores of American investors and millions of tourists.

Says Ogilvy: "In my trade, you spend most of your time selling beer and cigarettes. That's interesting, too, and you make the most of it. But you don't get too much emotional satisfaction out of it. Campaigns such as 'Operation Bootstrap' provide you such satisfaction." Ogilvy, Benson and Mather (OBM) in India has in fact undertaken a campaign on cancer, a point which Ogilvy stresses. "I think this cancer campaign is quite brilliant and I am proud of it and it is working."

Chequered Career: But advertising was not his first love. He ran away from academe (Oxford's Christ Church) to become chef at the Hotel Majestic in Paris—starting at the bottom, once even preparing a meal for a customer's dog. He went on to Scotland, selling cooking stoves, and then to the US, where he became associate director at George Gallup's Audience Research Institute at Princeton. The job took him to Hollywood, where he measured the selling potential of movie stars (the so-called "Audit of Marquee Values"), tested stories and forecast trends.

Came World War II and Ogilvy joined the British Secret Service. As a second secretary in the British Embassy at Washington, his task was to collect economic intelligence, and his primary function was to ruin businessmen who were working against the Allies, as well as to prevent Hitler from laying his hands on strategic materials—industrial diamonds, tungsten, vanadium, antimony. Ogilvy recalls today that almost all Allied embassies were invariably cooperative, but not the Indian. "It was not your ambassador, the enchanting Girija Shankar Bajpai, who gave me trouble, but his deputy, an Englishman (now Lord Trevelyan) in the Indian Civil Service. His loyalty to India was such that he got me into hot water by complaining to Lord Halifax (the then British ambassador) that I had no right to assume that the Government of India would support the British Government."

The end of the war saw Ogilvy try his

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ose between agencies to get exactly engths his product needs: he can between agencies with advantages in , marketing, media selection or even e hot shop to get the strongest ads." best example of increasing sophisti- is the transformation of the earlier ask of selecting the media in which to e. With national readership surveys g a mass of raw data, HTA was first nark with computer models based on information. Says HTA's Media r Suren Chawla: "Today if we decide product will be bought by males between 21 and 27 years old, who earn Rs 1,750 and above, we can feed our requirement into the computer and find out which will be the most cost-effective media forms for the campaign."

EVEN the selling line is researched in advance, first on a small pilot scale and later on a larger "universe" representative of the market segment identified as the target. Most large advertising agencies have full-fledged research departments. Alternative campaign plans are fed into computer models to test relative merits, TV commercials are pre-tested on audience samples in mini-theatres, and the product is even tried out on different consumer groups to arrive at the "slot" in which it should be "positioned". Says K. Kurien of Radeus Advertising: "If there is one common factor among all the top agencies today, it is the depth of research that is being undertaken."

With advertising thus becoming an inseparable part of almost any marketing effort, new products are being launched as almost pure creations of advertising *mantra*, one case being Hindustan Lever's Liril soap. Says Lintas Managing Director Alyque

nd at farming with the Amish com- nity in Pennsylvania—but, like his ndfather, he proved a failure. So, at 38, he decided to start an advertising ency. He had no credentials, no clients d $6,000 in the bank. Today, 32 years er, O&M has become one of the five gest advertising agencies in the world, h 109 offices in 35 countries, 1,600 nts and billings of $1.7 billion (Rs 30 crore). His recipe for success: irst, make a reputation for being a ative genius. Second, surround your- f with partners who are better than u. Third, leave them to get on with it."

Unique Record: Despite this self- cking modesty, Ogilvy has an unpara- ed record of writing advertising copy. r Schweppes, he persuaded his client, mmander Whitehead, to appear in his n ad, which ran for 18 years; for inness, he created a series of ides—to oysters, cheese, and game- ds; for Shell, he created a campaign ich for the first time in the history of oil industry explained the ingredients gasoline; for Dove, he advertised: ne quarter cleansing cream, Dove will am your skin while you wash." The mpaign still runs. For Sears Roebuck, ilvy created ads extolling the policies d services of Sears instead of the mer- ndise. These and other campaigns ade O&M so hot that getting clients was ke shooting fish in a barrel".

Wrote *The Observer*: "Ogilvy has rned more dollars for Britain than any ston since Winston Churchill won nd-Lease." *Fortune* proclaimed him a enius", Columbia Broadcasting Sys- n made a TV programme on him, and won the Parlin award from the erican Marketing Association. He rned an offer from the British Con- vative Party to reorganise their pub- ity machine and also a leading part in a oadway play. Dorothy Schiff invited n to succeed her as publisher of the w York *Post*—an invitation she had also extended to Adlai Stevenson and John F. Kennedy.

"I loathe flying. But I shall submit myself to this harrowing experience to participate in the 13th Asian Advertising Congress. Because this year's Congress is programmed to be one of the most educative for anybody seriously concerned with Marketing in Asia."
—*David Ogilvy*

The 13th Asian Advertising Congress.
Programmed to be uniquely stimulating.
A Congress of the most brilliant and incisive marketing, media and advertising minds. From 27th September to 1st October — five memorable days in India's capital city.
The food, the music, the people ... India, in all its splendid hues.
With your genius, make it one of the most enriching experiences of your career.
If your organisation takes you as seriously as you treat it, then you'll be there.

ADGRO 82

We are interested in attending the Congress. I look forward to more details.

13th Asian Advertising Congress
35 Maker Tower F
Cuffe Parade
Bombay 400 005, India

Name
Company
Address
No. of information kits required ——— No. attending ———

13th Asian Advertising Congress, New Delhi
27th September to 1st October, 1982

The ADGRO advertisement

Between all this came two books—the hot-selling *Confessions of an Advertising Man* and the more lukewarm *Blood, Brains and Beer*. In the latter, he wrote: "If I were hit by a taxi, Ogilvy & Mather would vanish into thin air. Clearly it was time to stop behaving like a one-man band and to convert the agency into an institution." This he set out to do, and feels he has achieved to some extent, praising OBM's men in India for producing "very good stuff".

Steady Growth: Advertising in Asia, he acknowledges, has improved rapidly. Gone are the days when he used to laboriously measure ads in Asian journals to see "if they had shrunk in size". Those days all copy used to be written in London. The growth of Asian advertising has been steady and controlled. It has gradually caught up with western countries, providing the classic "hare and tortoise" situation—which is what he has titled his keynote address for the New Delhi congress.

Today, the chef-turned salesman-turned pollster-turned secret service agent-turned farmer-turned advertising whiz-kid-turned country gentleman enjoys his new role— that of "Holy Spook" to O&M officers around the world, peppering them with an endless stream of memos, keeping in touch through a chattering telex in his Touffou castle ("It is the only 12th century chateau in the world with a telex"). He has made the transition from frenetic Madison Avenue to tranquil Touffou seemingly effortlessly, but got involved recently in the bitter bank lamb war in France, rushing to the aid of sheep farmers by writing an advertisement in *Le Monde*. He has almost completed his third book, still untitled, containing chapters like "Advertising in communist countries" and "Toynbee and Galbraith vs Roosevelt and Churchill" (the former pair denounced advertising, while the latter were supporters).

The telex at the Chateau de Touffou still clatters away while Ogilvy tends his garden, which he considers the most fragrant in France. Experts rate it among the 24 best gardens in the country. The chateau—listed by the Government as a historical site—is open to visitors in July-August. And tourists could well mistake the unkempt owner for a hick gardener as he potters around the magnolias, the honeysuckle and lilac, the daphne and the Trevithian daffodils.

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Padamsee: "For the Liril compaign, we found that while soaps were being sold for complexions, beauty and skin care, there was no soap to fill the slot of freshness. So we planned Liril as a rippled-green lemon-scented soap and advertised it with a girl bathing under a waterfall." The rest is industry history. Other similar success stories are legion. Complan, a nutritional supplement by Glaxo, was conceived, produced and marketed on a plan jointly devised by Clarion-McCann.

Yet, interestingly enough, the headline hitting successes have often been achieved not by the marketing-oriented subsidiaries of multinational corporations but by *desi* entrepreneurs trying to break into established market shares. Vicco proprietor Gajanand Pendharkar used an almost perfect textbook route to re-pack his product as a premium toothpaste and followed it up with an audio-visual blitz on radio, television and film. As the product's infuriatingly catchy jingle blared at every street corner and in every home, Pendharkar followed it up with a turmeric cream which soon became the market leader in its category. In less than a decade, Vicco's sales shot up from Rs 8 lakh to Rs 8 crore.

Promise toothpaste is a second example of an indigenous company, Balsara, breaking into a field dominated by multinationals. A third is Nirma Chemicals, which started out with cottage-scale manufacture of washing powder, then gradually grew in size to take on several gaints in a fight of near equals.

Regional Emphasis: Nirma's strategy highlights another facet of the changing scenario, since the company has not restricted itself to the high-profile metropolis-based publications but effectively tapped the vernacular press and regional markets. Advertising, inevitably, is shifting from the English language press to the vernacular, and some of the biggest successes of the decade have come to companies which gave "depth" to their advertising by tapping the regional markets.

Five years ago, an unknown vanaspati manufacturer in Ghaziabad, outside Delhi, approached HTA for an advertising campaign that would help him compete with his better established rivals. HTA decided to tap the non-English press in the northern region, and Amrit Vanaspati sales, says HTA's Delhi chief Ram Sehgal, have soared from Rs 12 crore eight years ago to Rs 80 crore.

Horlicks, similarly, has shifted the bulk of its advertising to the vernacular press, as have numerous other manufacturers who find that the growing market lies outside the big cities. "It's the people out there, the traders and small businessmen, who often have more disposable incomes," says Sehgal.

Overkill: But not all media blitzes are successful. In 1978, Rediffusion swamped newspapers and magazines with a brilliant pre-launch campaign for *New Delhi* magazine that yielded tremendous first issue sales. "But the magazine did not live up to the promise of the campaign," admits Rediffusion chief Arun Nanda. More recently, the United Breweries group launched Thril, the "space-age cola", in Bombay with a blaze of publicity aimed at penetrating the city's consciousness. But a Bombay adman now scoffs: "Where is that product now? We always say that there is no surer way to sink a product than with a giant campaign it can't live up to."

Nevertheless, the link between advertising and market success is clearly established. And the lesson has gone home to the smaller businesses as well. Using the newly started city-oriented magazines, local TV stations, or even reaching out to more catch-all publications, saree shops in New Delhi's Karol Bagh, *rossogolla*-makers in Calcutta and restauranteurs in Bombay have joined the bandwagon. Sunday patronage at the Studd restaurant on the Bombay-Pune highway shot up from 400 to 18,00 within a month of its Doordarshan campaign; sales at the Amrapali saree shop in a Bombay suburb rose from around Rs 30,000 to over Rs 1.5 lakh daily after a film, TV and press campaign. And radio and TV spots have won Babubhai Jagjivandas enough customers and fame to invite the militant labour leader Datta Samant to take a hand in his employee affairs.

Surveying the whole field, HTS's Sehgal says: "I think it is now clear that the advertising industry in India has reached maturity. People now see advertising as an input for growth."

—T.N. NINAN with CHANDER UDAY SINGH in Bombay

THE TOP 5
Billings in 1981

		(Rs Crore)
HTA	HINDUSTAN THOMSON ASSOCIATES	23.6
	CLARION ADVERTISING SERVICES	15.3
	LINTAS INDIA	11.8
OBM	OGILVY BENSON & MATHER	10.3
chaitra	CHAITRA	7.6

The High Flyers

• *IN HIS stark white Nariman office overlooking the Malabar Hill Frank Simoes, 44, sits muttering oaths. An antique escritoire against wall, the prematurely grey, kurta creative guru is going through the mun everyday routine associated with he a rapidly growing advertising agen list of possibles for his recruitment grab his attention, followed in succession by financial statements finally a pile of unsigned cheques.*

• *At 42, Arun Nanda finds managing India's fastest growing age almost second nature to him. The chief executive of Rediffusion crosse encased in fashion jeans, lights up a Player off the black glass-top des launches eagerly into a monologue finer points of financial manage Surrounded by advertisement award citations, he runs an agency which only among the most creative bu which has revolutionised the ad wor*

• *His Worli office is little differen the den in an average middle class, American home. Leather sofas flat walls, a small projector lies on a table and at his desk, S.S. Oberoi, faced not with writing-pads an conventional inkstand but a gle stereo system. Two mini-speakers fla T-shirted superstar of advertising fi he leans back and listens to the catc jingle he has just crafted.*

Starkly different in their appro and offering the advertisers com divergent styles of publicity, S Nanda and Oberoi nevertheless ha thing in common: they are the risin of the advertising firmament. Each an agency wich has created waves glamour world of advertising; thei success stories that have been respo for the most noticed, attention-gr and successful publicity campaigns

ONE-MAN SHOW

Eight years after he joined OB copy trainee, Frank Simoes was made a director of the multin agency. Two years later, in 19 celebrity copy-writer had left to shop on his own. Starting with o nascent Indian Hotels campaign Siemens account, which had fo him out of OBM. Frank Simoes Ad

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Simoes: a copy-writing celebrity

the company he started, had a billing its first year of Rs 18 lakh.

But in the years that followed, Si-es steered his agency through a period rapid growth. Award-winning cam-gns for the fast growing Taj group of tels added to his fame, and a string of ccesses in the next few years gave the ncy the reputation of being the hottest vertising 'boutique' in the country. eaking out of conventional moulds, noes developed brilliant new cam-gns for Raymonds suitings, Reliance tiles—"A woman expresses herself in ny ways; Vimal is one of them"—and tring of other products.

Today, Frank Simoes Advertising is a position to expect a total billing of 5.25 crore this year. He employs more an 100 people in the agency's four nches, but admen agree that it conti-es to be a one-man show. Putting aside administrative headaches each night, noes the creator gets down to writing catchy copy which catapulted him to top. The Visa cigarette campaign was result of one such session. Determined find a slot for the premium brand in highly competitive and over-advertis-field, he created an attention-grabbing mpaign which inevitably became an lant, success.

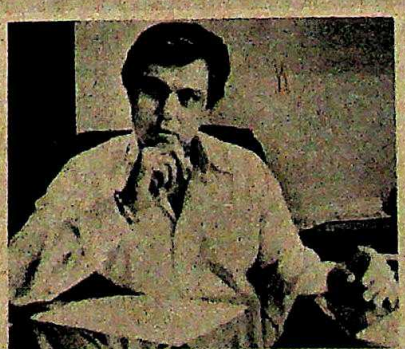
LAZING A TRAIL

When he left the Indian Institute of anagement, Ahmedabad, in 1966 with old medal in his bag, it was inconceiv-le of Arun Nanda that he might be-me an adman. The next six years were ent in Hindustan Lever, where he felt at a marketing man is incomplete with-t a strong knowledge of advertising. emembers Nanda: "Companies like ver, for all their marketing skills, don't m to know much about it."

A 10-month stint with the ill-fated M agency followed at the end of which nda, taking with him copy wizard Mohammed Khan and advertising executive Ajit Balakrishnan, left to form Rediffusion.

Starting with a measly Rs 6 lakh billing in 1973, Rediffusion moved up very slowly till 1977, when it suddenly leaped to Rs 85 lakh. The award-winning Jenson and Nicholson paints advertisement—"Whenever you see colour, think of us"—thrust Nanda and his agency into the limelight, and the climb up the advertising ladder began. By 1981, Rediffusion stood ninth in agency rankings with a Rs 6 crore billing, and this year it is pushing hard to replace Chaitra in the fifth position, with a projected 60 per cent growth that will hike billings to Rs 9.6 crore.

Rediffusion's success comes largely from the pathbreaking character of its advertisements. Creating completely unconventional, daring and effective new campaigns, the agency remains the most-talked-about in the trade. One campaign invited the public to walk into homes painted with Jenson and Nicholson many years ago to verify the paint's quality. In Delhi, an advertisement invited children to a wall-painting session in one home, at the end of which the drawings were washed off to prove the product's washability. Other successes have been the Garden saree advertisements, and most recently the aggressive no-holds-barred launch campaign for Wiltech blades, which are challenging a long-time monopoly in the industry.



Nanda: management know-how

SHOOTING STAR

After trying his hand at selling insurance policies in Calcutta, he arrived in Bombay 23 years ago with Rs 17 in his worn out wallet. A job with Baburao Patel's *Mother India*, another with *Eve's Weekly* and selling *Time-Life* books followed in quick succession. "But I had come to Bombay to become a film actor," said Oberoi. "And since nobody wanted me for that I decided to make films instead."

Around 1965, he managed to convince Parle soft drink magnate Ramesh Chauhan to allow him to make a promotional film for Gold Spot for a Rs 6,000 fee. Oberoi picked up Leena Chandavarkar, a budding actress with no roles, wrote the script around her, and both the film and the starlet became instant successes. More routine movies followed But it was only in the early '70s that Oberoi made his name with a series of

Oberoi: from strength to strength

short films on Glycodin Terp-Vasaka. Oberoi's biggest break came with Vicco's campaign in the mid-'70s.

Going from strength to strength, Oberoi in the next few years made highly effective films for Krystal toothpaste, Sehgal Papers' Snotex tissues, Amrapali sarees, Maharashtra state lotteries, Hero Majestic mopeds, and most recently for Nirma washing powder, every one of which has been a rave success. Comments one adman: "This man is unique in the industry. He has no airs or pretensions. He does not claim to be arty or creative and yet creates the hottest audio-visual campaigns in the industry. Oberoi is like the Manmohan Desai of the ad world."

This year, Oberoi's Art Commercia will have a billing of Rs 2 crore; he has recently formed an advertising agency to give clients complete campaigns for press, radio, television and films.

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

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The Sandur Manganese & Iron Ores Limited

SPEECH
BY
SHRI Y.R. GHORPADE
CHAIRMAN

THE SANDUR MANGANESE & IRON ORES LIMITED AT THE TWENTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 4TH SEPTEMBER, 1982

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have great pleasure in extending to you a warm welcome to the 28th Annual General Meeting of the Company.

The turnover of the Company went up to Rs. 24 crores from Rs. 17 crores last year, though the profit was Rs. 146 lakhs after providing depreciation of Rs. 119 lakhs, compared to a profit of Rs. 225 lakhs, after providing depreciation of Rs. 98 lakhs, during the previous year. It is proposed to declare a dividend of 15% on equity shares, as compared to 10% in 1979-80 and 12% in 1980-81. The main reason for the higher turnover was the increase in the sale of pig iron from about 28,000 tonnes during 1980-81 to 35,000 tonnes in 1981-82, the corresponding production of pig iron increasing from 29,000 tonnes to 40,500 tonnes. The sales of ferrosilicon also increased from nearly 8,000 tonnes in 1980-81 to about 13,000 tonnes in 1981-82, the production going up from 12,000 tonnes to 14,000 tonnes. However, our profits did not increase proportionately because of the drastic increase in power rate, in total disregard of our long-term agreement with the Karnataka Electricity Board, and a sharp decline in the average sales realisation on ferrosilicon due to further weakening of demand for this product in the internal market and much lower prices in the export market. We have represented to the Government of India, through the Indian Ferro Alloy Producers' Association, that ferrosilicon also badly requires the support of export subsidies to enable indigenous producers to utilise available power for the production of this product without building up unbearable stocks or incurring heavy losses on the export of ferrosilicon. The Government is yet to take a decision in this matter.

With regard to manganese ore exports also, the situation worsened inspite of our repeated representation to the Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation of India Ltd. (MMTC) to appreciate the basic fact that if our Company is to maintain its present labour force of about 3000 employees at our mines, we must be enabled to produce and export at least about 2 lakh tonnes per annum. Manganese ore is canalised through the MMTC, which was able to export only 50,000 tonnes of our ores during 1981-82, as against 86,000 tonnes last year, and an average of 2,70,000 tonnes during the years 1972 to 1974. However, the local sales of manganese ore during 1981-82 were 53,000 tonnes, including 38,500 tonnes to MMTC at Vizag at highly unremunerative prices. The world recessionary trends continued to affect the sales of manganese ore to the steel industry abroad, which is also now using less manganese ore per tonne of steel due to technological factors. During the seventies, the use of manganese went down from about 18 kgs. per tonne of steel to about 10 kgs. per tonne. Moreover, the South African mining interests have been able to make a serious dent into our established markets in Japan, by aggressive sales, utilising much large ships of 50,000 tonnes and faster rate of loading to bring down the freight charges. Our ports are not yet equipped to handle such big ships for manganese ore. Moreover, the policy of the Government of India to progressively reduce the volume of manganese ore exports, in the name of conserving it on a long-term basis, generated a lackadaisical attitude even with regard to the export of low grade manganese ore like ours, which is sustaining so much employment in this area and earning valuable foreign exchange, and whose reserves in our mining concessions are estimated at 30 to 40 million tonnes.

When the Vijayanagar Steel Plant, near Sandur, becomes a reality, it will no doubt enable our Company to produce and sell m manganese ore locally, thereby improving overall economics and viability of our min The foundation stone of the Vijayanagar S Plant was laid by the Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi, as early as 1971, at To in recognition of its great potential and after expert evaluation. I am sure, the Governm will take all possible steps to expedite the w on the Steel Plant and ensure its early completion. However, our Company has to depend mainly on exports and face the Sou African competition in the Japanese market and for this, the Company should be allowe greater initiative to conclude sales in Japan the East European countries, under the ov guidance of the MMTC, especially as our reserves of manganese ore are more than adequate to meet any future demand from d steel industry and, at the same time, to maxi exports. It is significant to note that the Japa steel industry, inspite of the recessionary limitations, imports annually about 100,000 tonnes of 38-40% Mn ore, which used to be almost wholly supplied by our Company un 1974, but now South Africa supplies the bu this demand, and the exports of Sandur A (38-40% Mn) ores to Japan during the year 1981-82 was nil. Under the circumstances t Government of India should seriously cons abolishing the export duty of Rs. 12.50 per tonne on manganese ore, which is serving purpose except to worsen our competitive position in the world market. The Governm should also consider giving an export incen for manganese ore and modernise the port facilities on a priority basis.

Inspite of these grave difficulties, the

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any has refrained from retrenching labour
ve been depending on our mines for
decades for their livelihood. But this
nployment factor and human
eration should also be fully supported by
MTC. As a result of the Company's
ment and production oriented policy, in
e of the MMTC and the Government
sing their restrictive export policies and
ystem, our manganese ore stocks have
to 3.36 lakh tonnes. However, during
r 1982-83 there are signs of improvement
rts to Japan and especially East
an countries. Every effort will be made
re that the stocks of manganese ore do
rease further.

production of electric pig iron has been
n-stay of our Company for the past few
It may be recalled that we established a
KVA electric furnace in 1968 to produce
0,000 tonnes of foundry grade pig iron
um. The furnace has served the interests
foundry industry in the country, especially
lised foundries which require quality pig
r nearly a decade and a half, and our low
orus pig iron made a name for itself in
e market for its quality and reliability.
e producing and selling about 2,500 to
nnes of pig iron per month, even after
e forced to increase the price of pig iron
l 1981, in keeping with the increase in
power and other inputs. But suddenly in
th of April 1982, our monthly pig iron
opped to 500 tonnes from an average of
,000 tonnes per month in 1981-82, and
t yet picked up. This was mainly because
mport of cheap pig iron that was
ed under the new liberalised import
China and Pakistan dumped pig iron at
tically low prices, which should be a
of concern for India. Both in the
rm and long-term interest of our
, we should not have allowed such
which does positive harm to indigenous
ion and to the basic policy of maximising
ance and reducing the foreign exchange
e result is that our Company built up
ocks of pig iron amounting to about
nnes, and consequently shut down the
furnace from Ist June '82.
iron production capacity
built up over the years by making
investments from scarce capital
es. To suddenly render this capacity
ous by permitting indiscriminate
, without specifically taking into account
ous production and capacity, is most
nate in a year which is being observed as
r of Productivity.'

e also unable to understand why the
duty on pig iron was reduced from 55%
after the imports were canalised
the Steel Authority of India Ltd.
from September 1981. Before that,
parties were permitted to import pig iron
e OGL, though prior to April 1981 pig
orts were totally banned. Moreover,
ovember '81 to March '82 there was no
duty at all. Even today, no distinction is
tween low phosphorus (0.2% P max)
phosphorus (0.4% P max), and
e a lot of low phosphorus pig iron has
to the country. The IMF loan, which
became necessary in the wake of oil price increases, is meant to strengthen the balance of payments position and not to displace indigenous production which is generating national income and employment. We have therefore represented to the Government of India that:

(i) Pig iron imports, especially low phosphorus pig iron, should be totally banned;

(ii) the concessional import duty of 20% should be withdrawn and the previous import duty of 55% should be restored, or even increased in the interest of protecting indigenous industry from dumping;

and

(iii) SAIL should purchase our pig iron stocks which are of proven quality.

If production units like ours, which have a long record of service to the nation, are forced to close down for no fault of ours and our production replaced by imports, it will only worsen the recessionary trends and considerably weaken the capacity and will of the nation to stand on its own legs and minimise dependence on foreign aid. We, however, welcome the decision of the Government to set up a high-level panel to review the imports of some sensitive commodities under the liberalised import policy. Pig iron production is extremely sensitive to imports, as already stated, and should be included as one of the items to be reviewed by the high-level panel expeditiously. The official thinking regarding the estimated gap between demand and supply of pig iron may also be re-examined, especially as SAIL is holding sizeable stocks of imported pig iron which are not moving. Overall concepts and strategies can prove counter-productive and even deepen recessionary trends if they are applied in a hasty and unimaginative manner, without taking into account the specific requirements of different industries. Shri L.K. Jha, Chairman of the Economic Administration Reforms Commission, has also recently stressed the need for an industry-wise approach, to ensure that well-meaning economic policies are so implemented that they strengthen indigenous industry and not weaken them.

The Company continued to pay attention to the various welfare measures which have, over the years, strengthened the standard and quality of life of our employees and maintained a human relationship of faith and confidence between management and labour. The subsidy scheme, by which the Company supplies to the employees essential commodities such as rice, jowar, turdhal, gramdhal, jaggery, sweet oil and chillies, at prices prevailing in March 1972, has cost the Company Rs. 55 lakhs during the year as compared to Rs. 31 lakhs in the previous year and Rs. 10 lakhs in 1976-77. This is not only a measure of the rate of inflation as it affects labour, but also a practical strategy to protect the real wages of employees from the ravages of inflation, and is capable of wider application on a nation wide basis.

The Company strengthened the nutrition programme by providing nutritious food to children in our balwadies and schools, apart from various other welfare activities in the fields of health, education and extension services. Under its programme for providing training for skills and productive employment to supplement the family income of the employees, the Company introduced the Sewing Machine Scheme, by which an employee is enabled to buy a sewing machine, with loans from banks and the Company to the extent of 75% and 25% of the cost respectively; the Company's loan being interest free, and the interest on bank loan in excess of 4% p.a. being subsidised by the Company. This scheme has evoked a great deal of interest and enthusiasm especially among womenfolk. The housing programme both at the Mines and Metal and Ferro-Alloys Plant is also making satisfactory progress.

The Company enjoys the unique record of not having had a single strike during the 28 years of its existence and, I am sure, the same spirit of harmony and understanding will be maintained in the years to come. I wish to express my deep appreciation of the good work put in by all the employees of the Company. I am grateful to all my colleagues on the Board and the Financial Institutions for their valuable guidance and support.

Thank you,

Yeshwantnagar,
4th September 1982 Y.R. GHORPADE

NOTE: This does not purport to be the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.

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INSAT-1A

Setback In Space

AT 2.57 a.m. on September 6, while the nation slept, a bleary-eyed Pramod Kale, project director of the Indian National Satellite System, INSAT-1A, depressed three switches at the Master Control Facility (MCF) at Hassan, Karnataka. The final switch snapped contact with the crippled gold and blue satellite lurching drunkenly 36,000 km above the ground, west of New Delhi. "Our bird is dead," mourned a space scientist in Bangalore.

The multi-purpose Rs 60-crore satellite, providing a unique combination of telecommunication, meteorological and mass communication capabilities, lasted barely 148 days after it was launched from Cape Canaveral on April 10. With its premature death, India's giant leap into an era of operational space systems went into an unaccountable tail-spin. An Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) scientist admitted: "It's a shame for all of us. Our plans have suffered a serious setback."

With INSAT-1A dead, over Rs 150 crore worth of related ground facilities now wait for a second satellite or alternative uses. Eight of 20 Doordarshan centres have been deprived of the daily 90-minute national TV programme that started on August 15. Similarly, 11 radio terminals that were broadcasting national programmes have fallen silent, while 150 direct reception sets (DRS) in the villages of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa will also miss national programmes and lie idle.

Casualties: National coverage of the Asian Games is another casualty, with large chunks of the population in Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka, Orissa, Maharashtra as well as the north-east now certain to miss out on live coverage. Some 20 imported low-power transmitters that were to be used in remote areas for Asiad telecasting will also be quite useless.

Other users of INSAT-1A are as badly affected: 28 earth stations set up specifically by the Posts and Telegraphs Department for satellite-telecommunications will now fall into disuse unless a skeletal service can be maintained with the help of the International Satellite Telecommunication Organisation (INTELSAT) satellite, at an estimated cost of Rs 2 crore annually. In fact, of the 4,000 communication lines that were to be hooked on through INSAT, barely 300 were operational before the satellite went dead.

The Meteorological Department, the third major user of INSAT-1A, has been as badly hit. In its short life, INSAT had been able to help the weathermen track this year's aberrant monsoon accurately, and give advance warning of the cyclone that hit Orissa in early June. But the computers and other facilities installed at the data utilisation centre in New Delhi will not now be used for their original purpose till INSAT-1B becomes available next year. And the satellite was dead before the Meteorological Department could even fully test the first of 110 data collection platforms that, once located in remote areas, would have fed data to Delhi via the satellite. Further testing (and hence production of the remaining platforms) will also have to wait for a year, as will the disaster w ning system that was supposed to installed using INSAT.

So, though the satellite itself is i red with the New India Assurance Com ny for Rs 58.41 crore, the loss becaus the disuse of the ground facilities (man which are still not ready) is estimate Rs 18 crore, while the non-financial d age goes beyond what figures can asse

INSAT-1B, an identical twin of INSA was initially planned as a stand-by s lite, and is due to go up aboard US space shuttle next July. But INSAT-1A's premature death, the stan will become the main satellite. A thir tellite, INSAT-1C, is scheduled for 198 this date may now have to be advance that it can function as a space spare the same time, efforts continue to sen a satellite manufactured in India.

Inevitably, a pall of gloom desce on the ISRO offices in Bangalore when latest case of infant satellite mortality

INSAT-1A'S ILL-FATED JOURNEY

APR.6 - SEPT.6, 1982

APR. 6 — Solar Sail damaged. Replacement postpones launch to 9 April

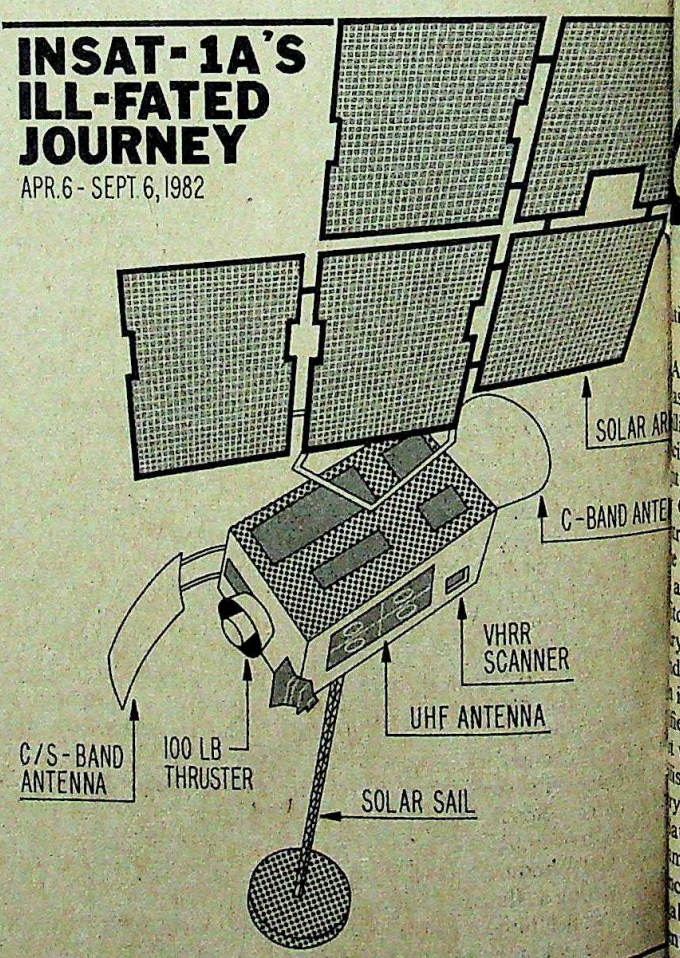
APR. 9 — Launch postponed because of bad weather.

APR. 10 — Launch carried out successfully but C-Band Antenna fails to deploy.

APR. 20 — Solar Sail jammed; refused to open out.

APR. 22 — C-Band Antenna opens out

MAY 15 — S-Band Transponder develops thermal constraints



JUNE 1 — VHRR develops power drops

AUG. 13 — VHRR power drops total. Instrument is shut down.

AUG. 15 — Satellite becomes fully operational. Limited national broadcasting starts.

SEPT. 4 — Loss of attitude control. Telemetry contact lost for four hours and regained only intermittently.

SEPT. 5 — Depletion of fuel noticed. Repeated attempts to deploy Solar Sail & VHRR fail.

SEPT — INSAT 1A is shut down

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ed. Said ISRO's balding director ao: "The setback is not only psy- al, but otherwise too. There is need orough indepth analysis to under- e problems." Probes into the reasons failure have already started, both ly and at the Palo Alto (USA) rters of Ford Aerospace and nication Corporation (FACC), who SAT-1A and were responsible for its n for its first 180 days (the insurance which the satellite failed to see th- Said an exasperated Dennis Killen, nanager for INSAT: "I wish I had an

Dhawan (left) and Rao: coping with failure

ion for INSAT's failure right now."

AGUED with problems ever since it as launched in April, the ill-starred lite, already working at barely half city, developed unexpected snags last t. On September 4, at 2 p.m., the Control Facility at Hassan no- range errors" in the data coming in satellite. The reason: INSAT-1A had attitude (or direction) control and tching" slightly. In its normal geo- y position, its antennae look towards d its solar array tracks the sun. If this is disturbed, attitude control has to ied immediately.

when the scientists sent commands ise the satellite, they inexplicably lost y contact. Space Department Sec- atish Dhawan, Rao and other scien- mediately huddled together in an cy meeting at the ISRO headquarters alore, while "blind commands" were nt by the MCF in the hope of regaining This was finally established after rs, but continued to be intermittent. oject Director Kale, who was away in abad—ironically to attend a meeting ss the "expansion plans of the master control facility of INSAT"—was asked to rush back. Rao meanwhile left for Hassan, about 100 km from Bangalore. But bad luck dogged him as the car driver lost his way, and had to drive through the night.

Finally reaching Hassan, Rao and other scientists noted while trying to stabilise the satellite that the thrusters which power it were reacting sluggishly to commands. To their surprise and consternation, the fuel data being fed in showed them that the two fuel tanks in the satellite were completely empty. Without fuel, no manoeuvres were possible with the satellite. And at 9 a.m., a dejected Rao telephoned Dhawan to inform him that the INSAT-1A chapter was over. Dhawan then reportedly informed the Prime Minister, Mrs Gandhi.

Kale, who reached the MCF that afternoon, was asked to perform the funeral rites. He made vain efforts to deploy the solar sail, which had never opened, and also the Very High Resolution Radiometer (VHRR), which had gone dead in mid-August. When there was no response to either command, Kale decided at 2.30 a.m. to shut down INSAT-1A, starting with the electronic system, then the propulsion systems and finally the telemetry transmitters. Only one transmitter was left on so that scientists could check later which way the satellite was drifting. "It will drift in an uncontrolled fashion, and may continue to do so for 1,000 years," Kale said. INSAT-1A had joined the space junkyard.

Problem Child: But long before the final days of crisis, the satellite had been a problem child. On April 6, two days before the scheduled launching, a badly placed baffle in the satellite's air-conditioning system ripped the gold-coloured conical solar sail which had to be replaced. After blast-off, two days late, the dish-shaped C band antenna—without which the satellite would become deaf and dumb—refused to open. Ten days later, the solar sail refused to open. With the satellite's balance thus lost, more fuel had to be used to keep it stable. Then thermal constraints developed for the S band transponders used for radio and TV broadcasts. Only one of these could now be used, and broadcast capability was reduced from 24 hours to 5 hours daily.

On April 22, the C band antenna finally opened after ground control resorted to the desperate measure of firing the thrusters under the closed antenna. But on June 1, power drops were noticed in the VHRR, which finally failed altogether on August 13. With fuel being used up for the various extra manoeuvres, the satellite's life was reduced from seven years to just 30 months, and only 44 kg of fuel was left when the satellite lost attitude orientation on September 4. Kale feels the fuel tanks emptied themselves during the black-out period when telemetry contact was lost. A valve which is supposed to feed the fuel for oxidation in the thruster chambers got stuck, and the fuel drained out.

With bolts getting jammed, switches becoming stuck, ejection systems not working and valves blocked, INSAT-1A was crippled and finally gave up the ghost. Observed Rao wryly: "It was the minor problems that seem to have caused the major setbacks."

The majority opinion was that failure resulted from plain bad luck, but criticism has not been absent. E.V. Chitnis, director of the Space Applications Centre in Ahmedabad, as well as numerous scientists in Bangalore, feel the policy of buying satellites will have to make way for indigenous manufacture, the implicit criticism being that FACC was to blame for some of the troubles. There was also criticism of the decision to go in for a multi-purpose satellite (INSAT was the world's only civilian operational satellite combining telecommunications, broadcasting and meteorological functions). Such multi-purpose satellites save money—send up one, instead of three—but the satellite becomes more complex. A third point of criticism was that the three-axis mode of stabilising the satellite should not have got preference over the more common spin stabilisation technique.

While these are matters of technical judgement, and implicitly risky because of the high technology and the learning process, ISRO spokesmen were pointing out that the components which failed in INSAT had proved themselves in other satellites: the C band antenna had not caused problems earlier, and the solar sail's astro-mast boom had been used on no fewer than eight satellites. Said one of them: "She was a good bird and is going to be the forerunner of many other satellites."

—RAJ CHENGAPPA with bureau reports

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ADOPTION

Innocent Victims

THEY are the abandoned of the earth. Each year, an incredible 11.5 lakh Indian babies are dumped like human garbage in the backstreets and by-lanes of the country. Unwanted and unloved, their future extends into a long and dark tunnel with just one, barely discernible glimmer of hope at its end—adoption. But last month, even that faint glimmer was abruptly, if temporarily, snuffed out following grossly exaggerated reports in the *Daily Mail*, a London daily, that a Calcutta-based adoption agency was selling babies outside the country. Though the report was later refuted, the damage had been done. Suddenly, adoption had become a bad word and adoption agencies exposed to the harsh glare of suspicion and even hostility.

In the sparkling clean clinic of the International Mission of Hope, the agency mentioned in the *Mail* report, four-month-old Baisakhi hovers at the edge of death. She suffers from a serious ailment that requires open heart surgery. Cherie Clark, executive director of the mission, had arranged for an American family in Oregon to adopt the baby and also arrange to have the necessary surgery performed. But by last fortnight, hopes of Baisakhi making the life-saving trip had receded drastically after the mission found itself the target of a reluctant governmental inquiry and Indian authorities have suddenly become chary of permitting babies to leave the country.

Defensive: Tragically, it has also succeeded in tarring all the adoption agencies with the same brush. Officials of adoption agencies have now gone on the defensive. Says Lalita Krishnan, president of the Indian Council for Child Welfare (ICCW), a Delhi-based agency: "We send children abroad to be adopted by foreigners as a humanitarian act. There can't be any question of making a profit." Tara Ali Baig, head of the SOS village, the biggest adoption agency in the country, was more explicit: "Prove one charge of irregularity against my organisation," she stormed, "and I'll resign immediately."

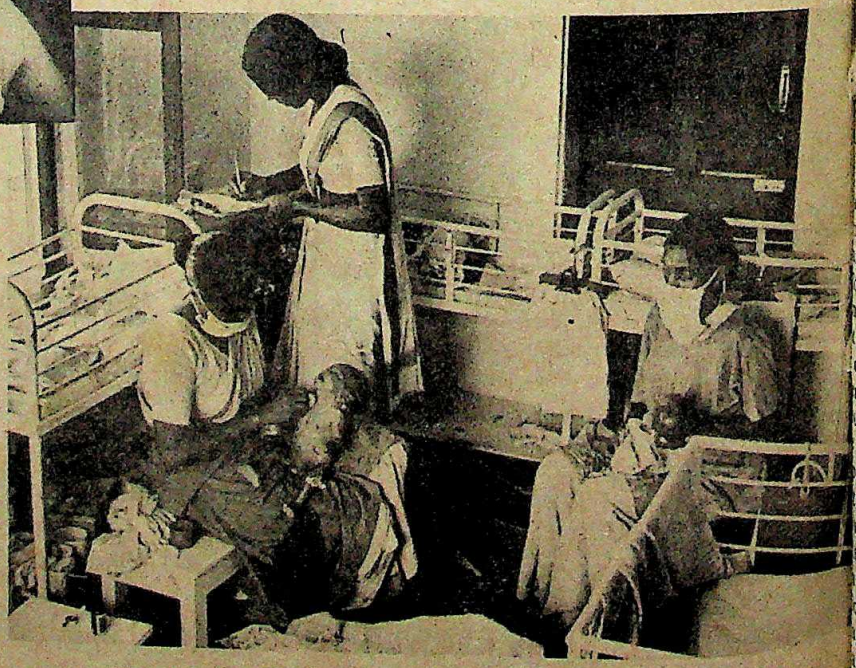
The chorus of denials was, however, diluted with oblique hints that there are possibly one or two adoption agencies, particularly in Calcutta, that have exported babies purely for profit. But all of them agree that the proportion is miniscule and has succeeded in giving everybody in the business a bad name.

The name has stuck despite the fact that the *Mail* report has been found to be absolutely baseless by governmental inquiries. Sheila Kaul, minister of state for social welfare, admits that "there is absolutely no truth in the report appearing in the *Mail*. There are enough safeguards against Indian children being adopted by foreign parents. I am afraid some people are spreading such reports only to sensa alise the issue."

Yet, agencies the Mission of Hope been badly affected. Cherie Clark: "Previ ly we used to get a doned babies from ing homes but they now stopped. They us they were afraid cause of all the ad publicity." In fact, the years, a numbe governmental inq have been institute adoption agencies a almost every case no gularities have been ved. But every now again an anti-adoption scare erupts, it did last month, and the entire proce adoption comes to a grinding halt.

Shock Waves: In Calcutta, an or sation run by noted Bengali litter Maitreyee Devi, is still feeling the waves from the *Mail* report. "My staff have been with me for a decade, are feeling a bit hesitant as doubts have cr about the whole practice of adoption." Devi. Sunil Prakash, general secretary Mission of Hope adds: "Previously, w no trouble getting passports for the chi But now, things have got very diffi Even the West Bengal Government happy at what it describes as a unnec attempt to creat hostility against o sations involved in humanitarian wor

The Indian Government insists tha



The Mission of Hope clinic, and (inset) Clark: unwarranted publicity

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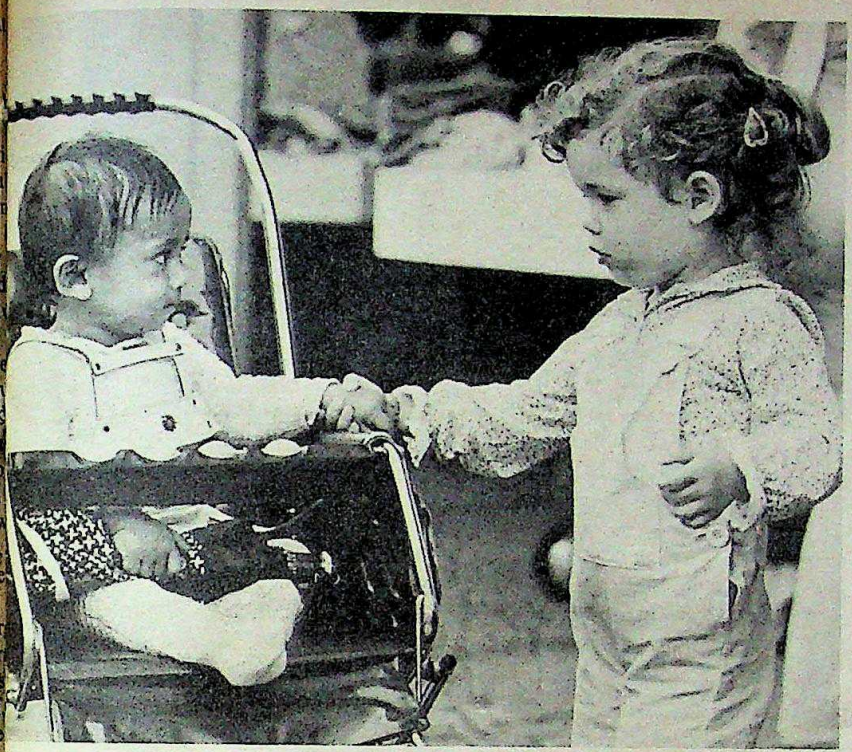

An adopted Indian baby in Germany: finding a family

of sale of foreign babies to fore-
s come to the notice of the ministry
d". Which does not mean that sale
s for profit is non-existent. But
ll the agencies contacted and in-
d in the states where adoption fi-
the highest, reveal very little scope
eering and a stringent, well-defined
e for adoption that extends well
he date the child finally arrives in
r parents' home.

RRENTLY, there is no specific law
r adoption of an Indian child by a
reigner. Foreign nationals are
children for adoption under the
and Guardianship Act (1890)
ntains provisions under which the
re competent to entertain appli-
or adoption from foreigners. But the
own agencies insist that they take
measures to ensure that the babies
care go into good homes and the
nts of the foster parents are checked
ughly as possible.

ICCW, for instance, lays down very
rocedures for adoption. All parents
o adopt a child from ICCW, register
es with the organisation by paying a
50. They are then sent a set of
forms with a recommendation by
Welfare Board or a recognised
gency of the country to which the
rents belong. The forms are then
accompanied by birth certificates of both the parents; declaration of willingness to adopt; declaration of income with tax returns for the last four years; special power of attorney in the agency's name; medical certificates of both the parents and marriage certificates. All documents are notarised and authenticated by the foreign ministry of the country concerned and the Indian embassy in that country.

Reports from countries like Sweden and West Germany indicate that a majority of the adopted children adjust well to their new environment and receive the same care and affection that they would from regular parents.

The ICCW charges the parents Rs 3,000 towards court fees after the child has been assigned to a particular set of parents and maintenance charges of Rs 60 a day from the date of acceptance of the child by the parents till the child leaves for its new home. Even after adoption, the new parents are required to send a regular report every month countersigned by a child welfare agency of the country which later is made into a quarterly report sent till the child is five years old.

Archaic Act: Most reputed agencies follow the same procedures but since the Act is an archaic one there are apparently enough loopholes existing to encourage short cuts and, in some case, irregularities. For instance, in Tamil Nadu, the courts demand a cash deposit of Rs 18,000 to be held as bond till the child attains maturity. Kerala courts demand Rs 10,000. Under the Act, children meant for adoption from a particular state have to be granted permission by the courts of that state. With Kerala and Tamil Nadu courts demanding high deposits, many children are quietly transferred to neighbouring Andhra Pradesh where no deposits are required, and their domicile records altered to prove that they belong to Andhra. Last July, Justice B. Lentin of the Bombay High Court censured a Bombay lawyer, Betram D'Souza Shenai, for fudging the domicile certificates for children from outside the state.

But these are minor transgressions in the sense that they are usually done to speed up the adoption process which is abnormally long. Says Manita Chandy, secretary of Ashraya, an adoption agency in Bangalore that has been in the business for the last seven years: "It is not that malpractices do not exist. They do. But if taken in relation to the entire volume of work, it is a very small percentage, though to some it may be more newsworthy than a government denial that such practices exist. So far it has never been proved that children are being taken abroad for sexual exploitation, slavery or for medical experiment."

Well-adjusted: Reports from countries like Sweden and West Germany also indicate that a majority of the adopted children adjust well to their new environment and receive the same care and affection that they would from regular parents. Harsha and Vandana, two children adopted from Bombay by the Neidermeyers of Cologne, have grown up in Germany, speak the language fluently and were it not for their colour, could pass off as healthy, happy German children. Saroj Patel, secretary of the Mahipatram Rupram Ashram in Ahmedabad, one of Gujarat's best-known adoption agencies, says she was touched by the "love and affection showered on children adopted by Swedish parents" during a recent visit to that country.

Another case is that of Kakoli who was adopted by a Swedish woman from Bangalore in 1977 from Anantha Sishu Vivas, the oldest orphanage in Karnataka. Kakoli was afflicted by polio as a child and was adopted when she was three by Maria Alborg, a trained nurse who lives in Visby, an old Gothic town in Gottland. Alborg

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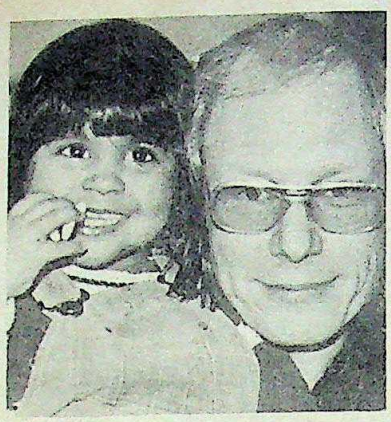
sends back regular reports to Bangalore accompanied by pictures showing her adopted child's progress. Thanks to the medical treatment she has been receiving, Kakoli has improved tremendously.

Unfortunately, last month's stink raised by the *Mail* and its accompanying cacophony in India means that there are many Kakolis and Vandanas who may not get out of India to a better life than they can ever hope for here.

The real tragedy, however, is that the people who are making the most noise a the so-called baby selling racket woul rdly be willing to adopt abandoned b themselves. The same people who raise whimper at female infanticide, at b being dumped on garbage heaps, at chi deliberately maimed and disfigured b ggars to elicit more sympathy. Indians, reaction to the *Mail* story once agai monstrated, are the most self-righteous ple in the world. But for all the w reasons. —DILIP BOBB with bureau



Lena with her Swedish foster father

SHRADHANANDA ANATHALAYA

Venal Trade?

FOR 55 years, the Shradhananda Anathalaya has brought up orphans, destitute and discarded babies at its ashram in central Nagpur. Thousands of children have been placed in homes around the country and many have been married off and settled in jobs. Since 1974, when the Government first gave its approval for adoption by foreign parents, up to 30 children each year have been handed over to the guardianship of families in Sweden, Holland and a handful of European nations.

Sudden Controversy: But the calm was abruptly shattered when Shradhananda Anathalaya got embroiled in a sudden controversy about its foreign adoptions. Disclosures about a "baby trade" by a disgruntled trustee were promptly picked up by the Nagpur press, and blown up into a raging and often irrational controversy. Social activists began a heated debate on the merits of adoption, the Hindu Mahasabha added a religious angle to an already confused issue, and the press clamoured for an impartial enquiry. Finally the Maharashtra Government on August 28 ordered Deputy Inspector General of Police S.C. Malhotra to investigate the affair. Among the charges to be probed were:

- that 230 infants from the orphanage had been "sold" to foreigners, mainly Swedes and Dutchmen;
- that Shradhananda Anathalaya superintendent Shamala Abroal, in collusion with the trust's president, had amassed large amounts of money and property as a result of the sale of babies;
- that a well-organised network consisting of Abroal, Bombay lawyers, and Indian agents of foreign adoption agencies ran a regular and lucrative racket in the "baby trade".

Preliminary inquiries have not revealed any irregularities. Said Malhotra: "The two case-studies given to us show that adoptions have been done according to the law. But we are still to go into details of the 150 children and the connections between the ashram, foreign agents in Bombay and the lawyers, so it's too early to pass any judgements.

One lead Malhotra will follow is that of a Bombay advocate, Bertram D'Souza Shenai. Shenai and his wife Colleen are both advocates who depend almost exclusively on adoption cases for their livelihood. In addition, the lawyer has built up a network for effecting adoptions. He collects children from orphanages and hospitals around the country, brings them to Bombay, where they are lodged at his Kindercare Centre, and manipulates their domicile certificates so that the guardianship proceedings can be pushed through in the Bombay High Court. Reportedly included in his sources for orphans is Shradhananda Anathalaya.

Commenting on the lawyer's "welfare activities" in a recent judgement on a petition by the Indian Council of Social Welfare, Justice B. Lentin of the Bombay High Court remarked: "The admitted facts reveal a grisly pattern of events manifold in their ramifications... To equate nobility of purpose with what had the overtones of a well-organised and lucrative business, is a mistake."

Allegations: Meanwhile, the controversy was heating up on another front. Bent on stopping what she called a "moneymaking racket", Dr Pushpa Pradhan, secretary of the Shradhananda Anathalaya trust, filed a petition with the Charities Commissioner demanding an enquiry into the ashram's financial affairs. Stating that trust President Sumatidevi Dhanwate, Shamala Abroal and three other trustees had defrauded the orphanage and made huge profits from the adoptions, she asked that they be dismissed and the records siezed.

Arguing that Abroal and her co federates had "surreptitiously" give about 230 "inmates" of the orphanage i foreign adoption without consultation o sanction from Shradhananda's genera body, Pradhan's petition states that th was done in order to make large amount in illegal donations which were the siphoned out of the trust coffers. "Mo of the adoptions were... done by Sm Abroal surreptitiously as also su piciously", stated the petition, "... persons of foreign origin whose bon fides were never verified by the trust an its governing body... It is therefore ev dent that the respondents have bee manipulating the affairs of the trust an swindling the finances."

According to Pradhan, who is a sociate professor of microbiology at th Nagpur Medical College, Abrol and th trustees received illegal donations as con sideration for giving the infants in ado tion. An example is cited in the petitio while donations from Holland shown the orphanage records totalled rough Rs 1 lakh, enquiries made with Worl Children, the Dutch adoption agenc revealed that they had actually donate more than Rs 3 lakh. Said Pradha "And this default of Rs 2 lakh is nothin compared to the total. The vast majori of the children actually went to Swede and there are no records kept of th amount of money received from tho agencies." Pradhan charges that Abro has built up substantial property from th adoption money. However, the poli and Charity Commissioner's enquir were still incomplete, and the charg unproved. Abroal hotly denied the al gations: "My 18 years of dedicated s vice have gone up in smoke because this controversy. This woman is ju jealous because I was the one who r gularly went abroad to place children foster homes, and she never got a chan to go. So she has fabricated these ch rges against me."

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH in Nag

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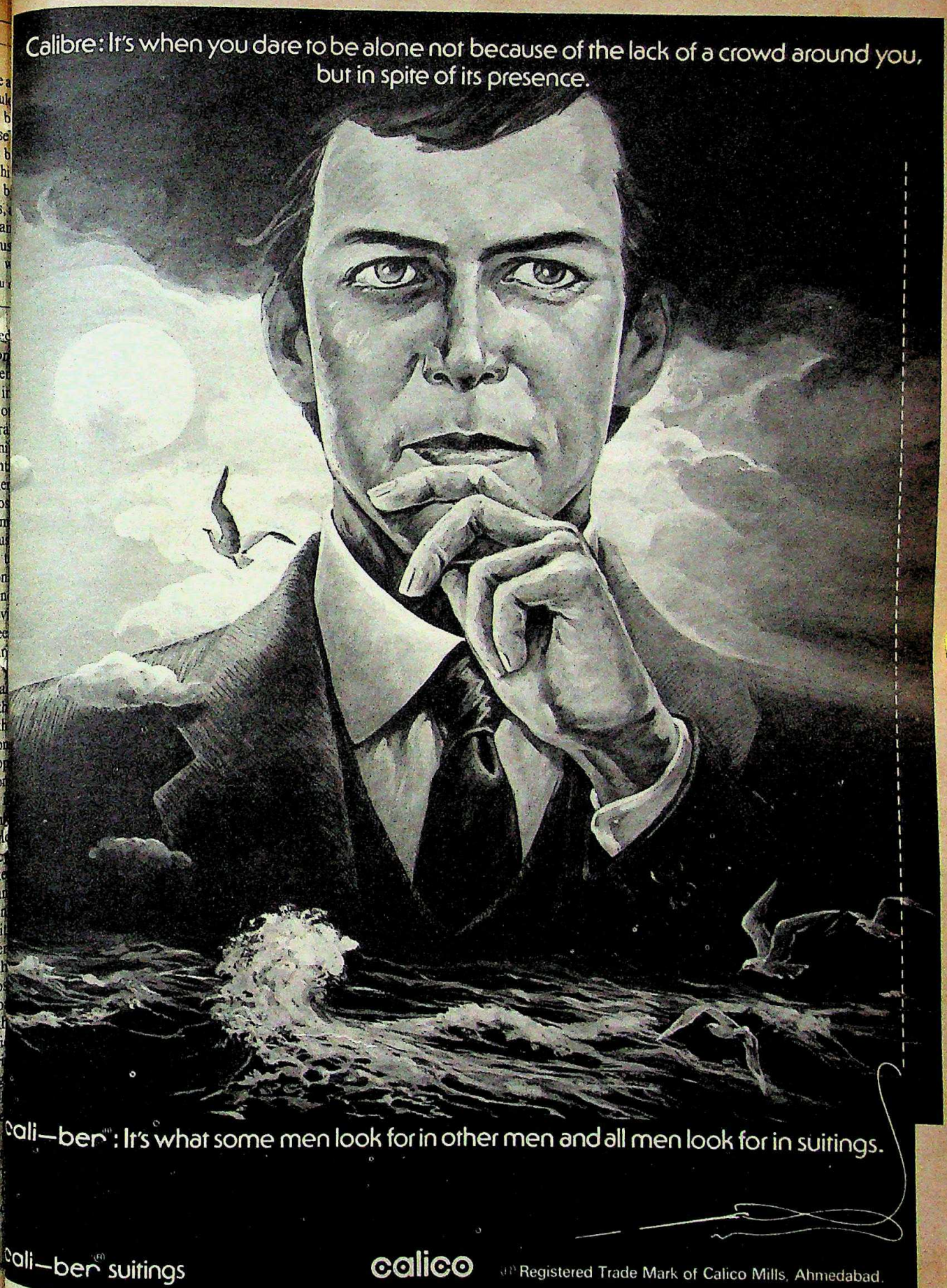

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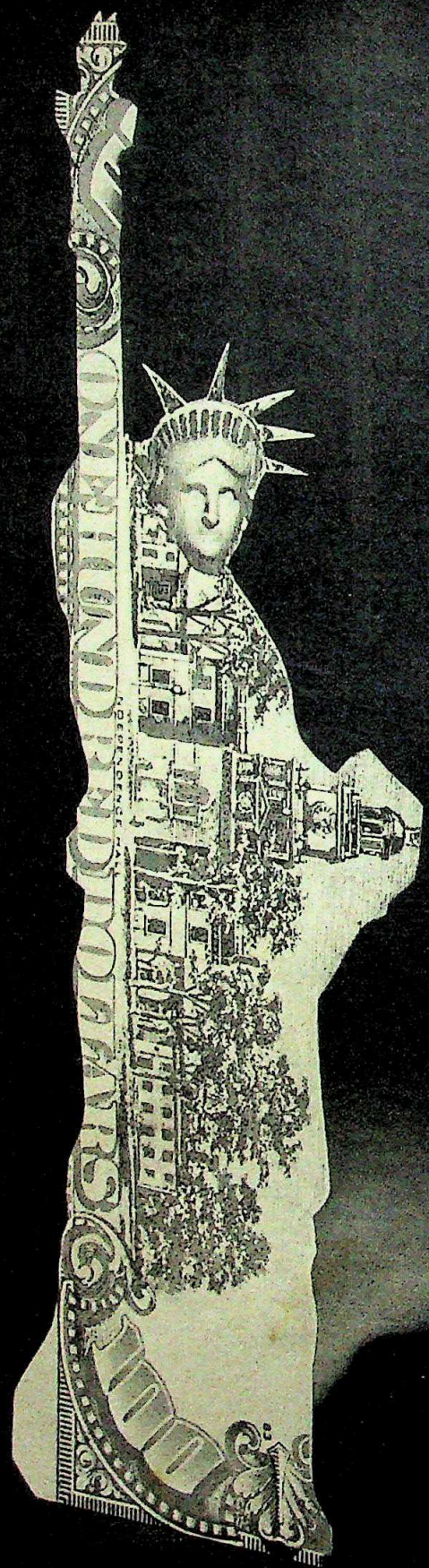

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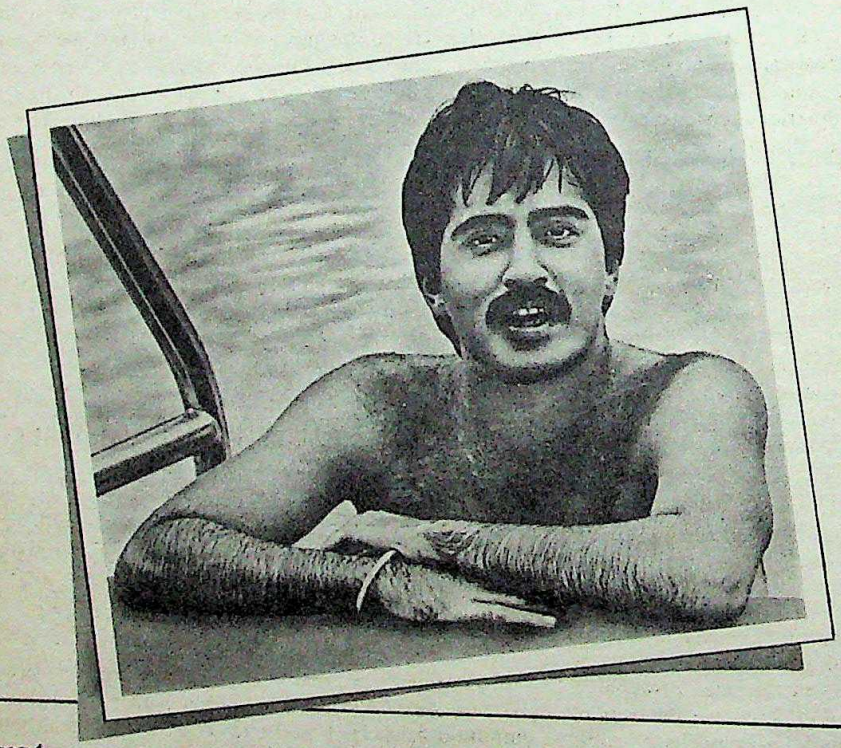
"I don't believe a visit
to the health club makes a man
exclusive.
Nor even the initials on his swim-suit.
I believe in an appearance
that's personal.
A look that says it all without
having to say a word...



But first,
a super-smooth shave
to give me the edge."

Erasmic Supreme
The blade with the diamond edge.

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ELECTRONICS REVOLUTION

A REVOLUTION in consumer electronics seems round the corner, judging from the number of producers rushing into the field. The Punjab State Electronics Development and Production Corporation plans to start producing video cassette recorders (VCR's) shortly, for which it has already got a letter of intent from the Government. Another letter of intent has been given to an entrepreneur in Gujarat for producing VCR's, and more projects are expected to be cleared soon.

Meanwhile, the Industrial Promotion and Investment Corporation of Orissa plans to manufacture a million pre-recorded cassettes annually, while at least three projects are planned for producing television picture tubes: one in Punjab, a second by the public sector Bharat Electronics Ltd in Bangalore, and a third by the Tata company, Nelco Ltd, which plans to produce colour TV picture tubes.

A rush is also expected into electronic watch manufacture, though interested large houses have been kept out by policy restrictions. Many of the licences being issued, however, are for intrinsically uneconomic levels of production (500 annually, in the case of VCR's), and there seems little doubt that these will end up as screwdriver-assembly operations.

STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

CO Electronics and Electricals Ltd (formerly Philips) is panding in all directions at a breathtaking pace. The com- plans a tie-up with Kelvinator to produce refrigerators nds moving later to mixers and washing machines. Its li- capacity for producing radio receivers has already been ed fivefold, to 3 lakh annually. Now the Government has letter of intent to step up production of glass shells by 50 to 45 million, apart from an industrial licence to produce lion resistors of various types. In another corporate , the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Com- (MRTPC) has cleared the company's application for a li- o produce microprocessor systems for industrial users, ng the objections of small-scale producers.

ajor reason for this sudden burst of growth is the company's of foreign shareholding to 40 per cent, which frees it from the ns of the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act (FERA). The has also been playing a major role in supplying the lighting r systems for the Asian Games. And equipment for the four roadcasting (OB) vans for colour telecasting the Asiad are ocured from a Peico-associated company in Britain, Pye- learly, the Government's insistence that Peico dilute its shareholding has proved a blessing in disguise.

HOT SEAT

E PRODUCT with probably the most sensational laun- ing in Indian history has proved a minor disaster on the arket. Bajaj Auto's M-50 mini-motorcycle attracted a g 1·1 million advance bookings and consumer deposits of rore. Now, however, the product has reportedly come st widespread consumer disappointment, and a number le who had booked the vehicle are now asking for a f the deposits they had made against bookings.

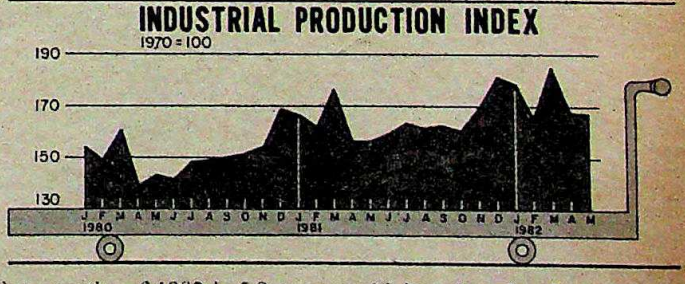
rmed at this turn of events, Rahul Bajaj rushed to Japan ight to try and work out a collaboration agreement with ki for a new engine that can be fitted on the M-50. Ear- r Japanese companies like Honda and Yamaha had refu- ollaborate with Bajaj. The result of Bajaj's latest dash to still not known. But with Honda, Yamaha and Suzuki to make an entry into the Indian market in collabora- Bajaj's rivals, as also with Bajaj's own erstwhile colla- Piaggio of Italy, things are likely to get a trifle hot under for the country's biggest producer of two-wheelers.

MARKET COMPULSIONS

WITH tyre prices falling, and consumers demanding further reductions of as much as 25 per cent, the producers say they have been caught between rising costs and high taxes on one hand, and the buyers' inability to pay on the others. Half the tyre companies are in the red and the rest make modest profits on their sales. For the industry as a whole, last year saw a negative return on sales—despite no fewer than 16 price hikes in the last five years—resulting in a cumulative price increase of 150 per cent.

FAVOURABLE FIGURES

FOR ALL the talk of a recession, the industrial production index refuses to recognise any problem. The index took a sharp dip in February but has recovered since then, and in May (the latest figure available) was higher than that for May 1981 by a handsome 7.4 per cent. The average index for the first



five months of 1982 is 5.8 per cent higher than for the corresponding months of 1981—a better than average performance.

The sector-wise details indicate that all the major industries are doing well, barring textiles (which is affected by the Bombay strike) and transport equipment. In April, for instance, the production of food and beverages was up over April 1981 by over 60 per cent, of tobacco by 12.6 per cent, of paper by 4.8 per cent, of rubber products by 9.5 per cent, of chemicals and chemical products by 1.8 per cent, of machinery by between 5.2 and 6.4 per cent, of basic metal industries by 6.6 per cent, and so on.

Against this, the textile production index was down by a hefty 14.9 per cent and that of transport equipment by 0.7 per cent. This latter is primarily a product of the credit squeeze and of reduced demand for trucking services following a better performance by the railways.

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GLOBAL ECONOMICS

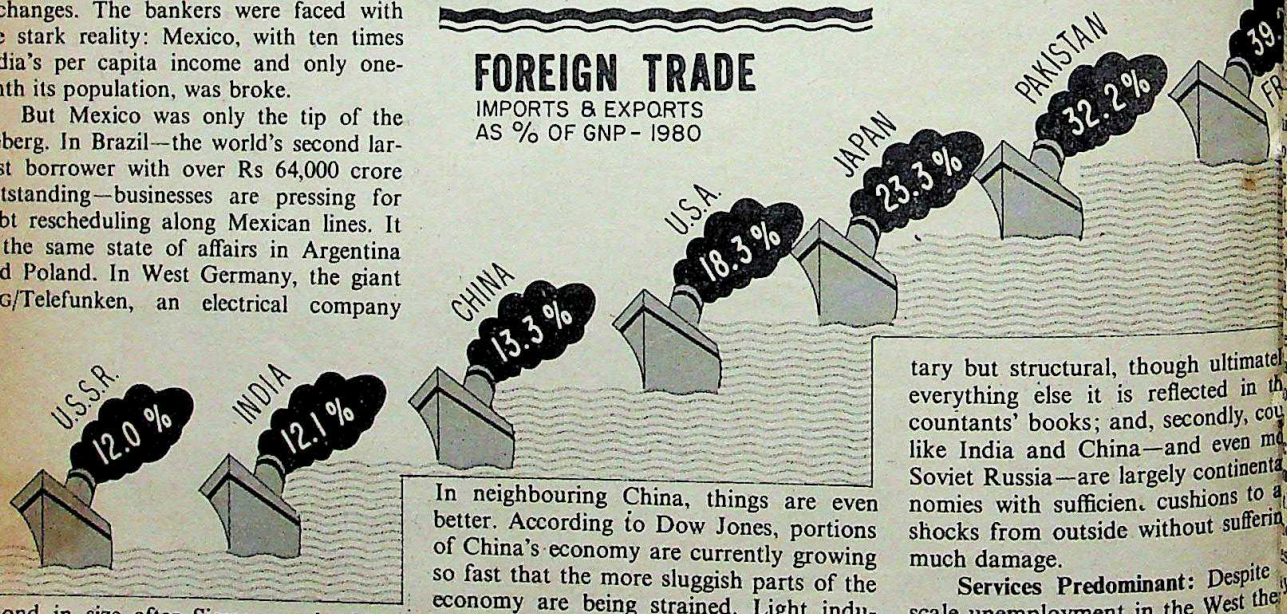
The Dangerous Connection

WHAT would Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee do if he had to step into the shoes of Jesus Silva Herzog, his counterpart in Mexico, who owes US and European banks something like Rs 72,000 crore, more than half India's national income? "A few months ago," Herzog told the bankers in New York last month, "we used to have a queue outside our offices offering beautiful financial transactions, and we were in the business of selecting which was best." Then suddenly the price of Mexico's biggest asset, oil, fell. More and more Mexican companies, even the giant Alfa Corporation, hit trouble. A run on the peso began and Mexicans started desperately converting everything they had into dollars. A crash austerity programme failed to stem the run on the peso and the President, Jose Lopez Portillo, who was Mrs Gandhi's host at Cancun, closed the exchanges. The bankers were faced with the stark reality: Mexico, with ten times India's per capita income and only one-tenth its population, was broke.

But Mexico was only the tip of the iceberg. In Brazil—the world's second largest borrower with over Rs 64,000 crore outstanding—businesses are pressing for debt rescheduling along Mexican lines. It is the same state of affairs in Argentina and Poland. In West Germany, the giant AEG/Telefunken, an electrical company second in size after Siemens and with a turnover of Rs 6,300 crore last year—more than the turnovers of Tatas and Birlas put together—has been caught in a cash squeeze and may go under without trace. And the authoritative 1982 World Development Report put out by the World Bank last month showed that the Third World was having to cut growth in a desperate attempt to keep up payments to bankers.

Is the world—the affluent industrialised world as we have known it since World War II—going to pieces? Some people are going round saying that the world will soon be hit by a depression worse than that of the '30s. There are more than 10 million unemployed in Western Europe alone—the largest number since the War—and according to a survey by the *Observer* (London) one out of every four workmen in Britain, or nearly 6 million people, had no work in the past 12 months. The West is apparently in the grip of something more than an economic crisis: its self-confidence as industrial leader of the world has begun to be undermined.

Questionable Impact: By all accounts, the near-global crisis should affect us also but the impact so far has been only marginal. India has had an exceptionally good year, according to L.K. Jha as well as other government spokesmen, with the industrial output rate only a bit short of 10 per cent, inflation close to zero and industrial investment running at record level.



In neighbouring China, things are even better. According to Dow Jones, portions of China's economy are currently growing so fast that the more sluggish parts of the economy are being strained. Light industrial output has risen 9.6 per cent from a year earlier and output in heavy industry 9.7 per cent. Exports in the first half of the year increased 8.7 per cent from a year earlier and imports dropped 22 per cent to yield a hefty trade surplus of Rs 900 crore.

India's performance on the foreign trade front has not been so impressive. According to the latest available figures, exports rose from Rs 6,710 crore in 1980-81 to Rs 7,560 crore in 1981-82, but imports shot up too, from Rs 12,524 crore to Rs 13,447 crore respectively. Crude oil and petroleum products accounted for the bulk of imports (around Rs 5,161 but they were less than in the pre year. Steel, synthetic fibres, newsprint micals and wheat made up the rest.

THE FACT remains that the I and Chinese economies could their ground and were only n nally affected by the sharp downtu the fortunes of the industrialised co This belies the so-called 'locomotive ry, very popular with World Ban other pundits, which assumes that Mary's lamb which followed her wh she went, the fortunes of the poor tries are inextricably tied up with th the rich ones. If so, the knot must very loose one.

There are two reasons for this. ly, the crisis which the rich countri passing through is not financial or tary but structural, though ultimatel everything else it is reflected in th countants' books; and, secondly, cou like India and China—and even m Soviet Russia—are largely continenta nomies with sufficien cushions to a shocks from outside without sufferin much damage.

Services Predominant: Despite scale unemployment in the West the been only a marginal fall in its gro tional product (GNP) which means th people who are jobless are not rea quired so as to maintain output at t rent level. What has happened is th western economy is now increasing minated, not by its manufacturing but by the services. The services co a wide spectrum of activities and p ions, many of them very old and liar—from the world's oldest to the store—that do not build or manufac final product. In the US for instanc services exceed its manufacturing sec

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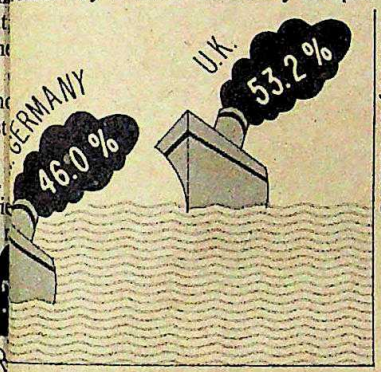
ment and total sales, thus giving the concept of a 'new class', viz a dge' sector of computer program- edia experts, lawyers, social admi- rs and a cornucopia of varied con- . A society in which goods-produ- ustries have declined to one-third ork-force is obviously qualitative- ent from that of blue-collar work- spend most of the time on the or.

shift from manufacturing to ser- seen as reversing the great produc- ains that arose from the previous m agriculture to manufacturing. the 1970s manufacturing producti- reased by a total of nearly 90 per



Charts by B.K. Sharma

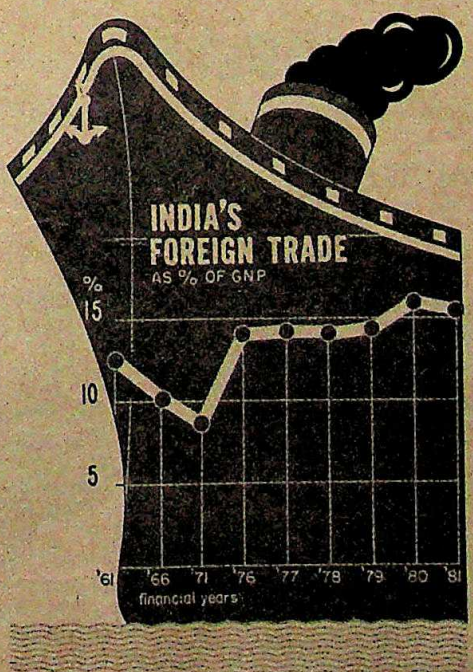
ile office productivity—the services perates from offices—rose by just nt, that is, less than one-half of 1 a year. And it is this shift from ductivity manufactures to low-pro- services that is at the bottom of tion problem, just as the slow-mo- n sector is India's Achilles' heel. It a long time for the US and other alised—or rather, service coun- adjust themselves to this basic their economies; until then the onomy will be in a turmoil.

mparative Performances: In a situa- this kind, too close an involvement e markets dominated by these s can be unsettling. Smaller coun- y not have much of a choice in the but continental economies like d China can afford to be cautious. ng to the 1982 World Develop- eport, India and China have been restrict their involvement with arkets to between 12 and 13 per their GNP, with the result that the in the West has affected them only lly. Japan and Britain are even examples. Both are largely open es, Japan even more so than Bri- the latter has its own oil resources ot, to that extent, affected by the ch.

while Japan's foreign trade (im- nd exports) accounts for 23.3 per cent of its GNP (according to the World Bank)—not a very high figure considering that Japan imports nearly every industrial raw material from crude oil to coal and iron ore to cotton—British foreign trade accounts for 53.2 per cent of its GNP. The figures for West Germany and France are 46 per cent and 39 per cent respectively. It so happens that these three countries (West Germany, France and Britain) are caught in a terrible economic squeeze, while Japan, with roughly half the level of foreign trade involvement of these countries, has not done too badly.

In the case of India, the 'involvement' ratio—the ratio of exports and imports to GNP—has been steadily increasing from around 12.5 per cent in 1960-61 to 15.5 per cent in 1980-81. Surprisingly, it moved down steadily from 12.6 per cent to 8.7 per cent between 1960 and 1970 but picked up later, undoubtedly as a result of the soaring oil prices, to 14.1 per cent in 1975-76 and 16 per cent in 1979-80 and may touch Japan's level of 23 per cent in a couple of years. (These ratios are different from those given in World Bank statistics). One reason for this is the liberalised import policy following the IMF loan contracted last year. India has imported synthetic fibres, cement, chemicals (like soda ash) and steel in large quantities in an effort to curb prices and this has swollen the ratio. Perhaps, when the treasury runs out of IMF foreign exchange, imports will come back to normal and the 'involvement' ratio be brought nearer 12 per cent, the same as China's.

Advance Planning: India seems to have run out of steam as far as import



substitution is concerned. We now make virtually everything that used to be imported 10 years ago but imports still go on. Even the World Bank which has always advocated outward-oriented policies-meaning more exports and an open economy—is now stressing the importance of imports being replaced through expansion of domestic capacity. In such a scheme there can be no place for imports—such as colour TV—which are not self-liquidating. It is also not clear why the Government has been so anxious to import wheat when reasonably sufficient stocks were reportedly available to meet emergency situations. It has been estimated that roughly Rs 1,000-crore worth of imports last year were totally unnecessary or avoidable and could have been saved with a little bit of advance planning.

Regarding export-led growth it is worth asking whether India can ever become a great exporting country, like, say, Japan or, until a few years ago, Britain. There are at least two reasons why it cannot: firstly, it doesn't need to; and, secondly, it has a large hungry market at home that can gobble up anything it produces. It doesn't need to because it is virtually self-sufficient in industrial raw materials, with the sole exception, perhaps, of petroleum. And as for the home market, an increase of per capita income of as low as Rs 5 per year can give rise to a demand of Rs 1,000-crore worth of non-food commodities.

Self-reliance: Non-involvement, it must be explained, is not the same as self-reliance. It is possible to have a large measure of self-reliance (as Japan has) and yet be heavily involved in international trade. Trouble arises when you are backsliding on self-reliance (as India obviously is) and yet want to build up a large stake in world trade.

The Japanese build a steel plant in three years from the word go, and do it all themselves using the latest technology, borrowed or otherwise. We have been negotiating the Paradip steel plant for the last three to four years with little to show for it except perhaps a foundation-stone. With this kind of casual approach to growth, it is futile to deliver sermons in Toronto and other places on the perversities of the rich. In the ultimate analysis, resources are what we make ourselves, not what grows in Washington or elsewhere. If Mexico, an OPEC country, can go broke overnight and if AEG/Telefunken can be forced to pull down its shutters, not all the SDR's (Special Drawing Rights) in Washington can grace New Delhi's little hand, when the chips are down.

—JAY DUBASHI

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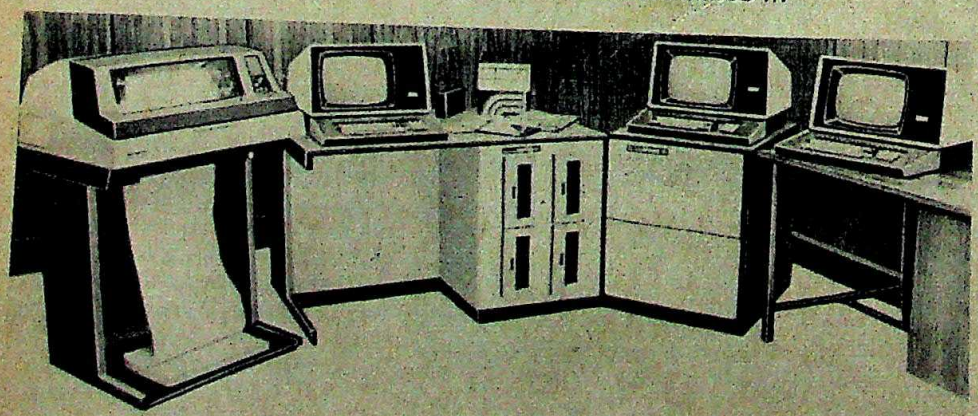

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latchet Operation

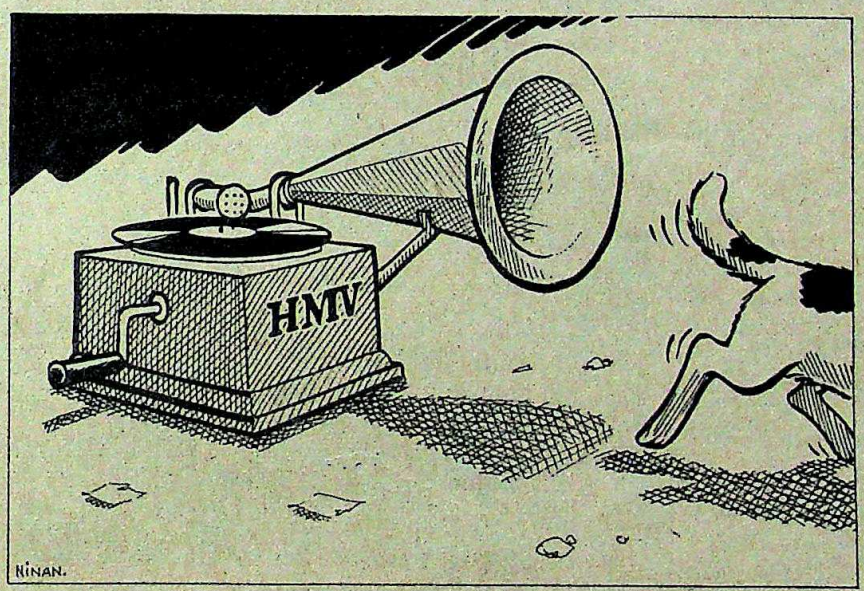
EXTBOOKS on management have a polite word for it—"rationalisation". But when the Gramophone Company ia (GRAMCO) completes the hatchet on which began last fortnight, it will osed down manufacturing plants and ding studio, and lost more than half l work force. By end August, 14 office at the music manufacturer's Bombay had been retired, and 65 more at the vli record factory in that city retren- cause of the units closure. When the ng process is over, roughly 700 of the ny's 1,400 employees will be laid off; rofitable consumer electronics divi- its Dum Dum arters in Calcutta shut down, reduci- MCO's annual tur- 1981 sales: Rs 20 by 20 per cent and ber of unprofi- superfluous or ant operations at en branch offices ve been drastically or dropped al- er.

or 87 years the a dog with ears at a gramophone adorned records uipment made by in India. Of late. r, the ears have increasingly and bedraggled Master's Voice was hit first by the competition from (now Music India), and more re- by the ubiquitous music pirates. In three years, although GRAMCO's reports have continued to show an profitability due to booming music NDIA TODAY, July 15), sections of the ny's operations have been gradually ed by market pressures, till last fort- was clear that they were in danger pletely caving in.

fact, last fortnight's cuts by the music y giant were the desperate austerity es of a company in deep financial . Although GRAMCO executives were ng to disclose details, it was apparent vents in Bombay and Calcutta that a liquidity crisis confronted the com- The sophisticated recording studio at y's World Trade Centre was hastily d of for a reported sum of Rs 47 lakh; unable to pay for its mounting stockpiles of unsold record-players, the Consumer Electronics Products (CEP) division at Dum Dum slashed production by 80 per cent and the lay off of employees in both cities helped cut expenses further. The unstated reason for the cuts: working capital loans for over Rs 1 crore were being called up by banks for repayment.

Drooping Sales: At the root of the crunch lay GRAMCO's CEP division. Set up 35 years ago with the specific objective of popularising cheap record players and thereby boosting the company's disc sales, it has never been a profitable unit. But the losses were budgeted for, since GRAMCO's management reckoned that the 60,000 record players sold annually would generate enough record sales for the music division to make it up. In the last three years, however, competition from the cheaper cassette players sharply eroded record-player sales, driving the unit further into the red. Sales of the best-selling 'Fiesta' model dropped rapidly from 40,000 units a year to zero this year, and the sturdy 'Calypso', used largely by *bajawalas* at weddings and festivals, from a peak of 30,000 to an estimated 15,000. One reason, of course, is that the HMV range of record players were technologically far inferior to more progressive rivals like Philips, Bush and positively archaic compared to the higher-priced music equipment range offered by companies like Sonodyne and Cosmic. Said one GRAMCO watcher: "They should have seen the writing on the wall and done a long time ago what they're doing now in a crisis situation. But because they consistently made profits in the near-monopolistic music market, their errors and inefficiencies never came to light."

Even the increased losses on consumer electronics—last year the division suffered thrice its budgeted loss of Rs 70 lakh—might not have resulted in the unit's closure if it wasn't for the company's crippling shortage of cash. Market reports indicate that GRAMCO has about Rs 5 crore tied up in unfinished production, unsold stocks of record players, and dealer outstandings, much of it unrecoverable. Production in the CEP division, as a result, is at a virtual standstill, and in the next few months the unit will close down. Although they anticipate trouble from the 600 employees who will be laid off in the process, GRAMCO's management is determined to push it through. At least 250 workers nearing retirement age have already been asked to accept voluntary retirement. "The market has been wiped out in less than 18 months", admitted Anil Sud, GRAMCO's young managing director, "and unless a miracle happens and we have a sudden boom, we have no choice but to phase out the record player manufacture".



Unfortunately for GRAMCO, the crisis comes at a time when both sales and overall profitability are threatened by a steep rise in music piracy. Till March, 1982, the music business was booming—cassette sales for the giant had shot up from around 50,000 to 140,000 per month—and the company was forced to augment its own cassette recording facilities by farming out production to independent recorders. But early in April the effects of an 18 per cent hike in excise on audio cassettes was felt, and the bottom soon fell out of the market.

Lower Prices: In a bid to combat pirate recordings, both GRAMCO and Music India had kept the price of their cassettes deliberately low: at Rs 40, they were Rs 12 cheaper than the discs. But the inflated excise level pushed pre-recorded cassettes to Rs 50, driving consumers towards the vastly cheaper pirate copies, which retail in the Rs 20-30 range. It is difficult to estimate the precise benefit to cassette pirates as a result of the levy, but Sud insists that today more

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than 85 per cent of all tape recordings available are illegitimate copies. Finally, two months after the price hike, both companies decided to absorb the excise and defend their markets. Music India slashed its retail cassette price to Rs 38,and GRAMCO to Rs 44. The markets were restored, but increased pressures on profitability made it imperative that GRAMCO set its liquidity and cas flow problems in order.

Critics in the record industry insist that GRAMCO's troubles are largely of its own making, and could have been avoided by a more efficient management. Insisting that the giant had been too complacent to notice the switch in consumer preferences, an industry executive explained that the company had been tardy in shifting to cassettes, had not developed independent recorders to augment its limited capacities, and had tried to promote outdated record players. He said: "There is no reason why the company's liquidity should be tight. In fact they have been starving the market of cassettes even though it's clear that they are in demand, and sticking instead to records and record players which nobody wants."

Music industrymen also accuse GRAMCO of bad financial management and misguided investments. In the past few years the company has diverted its boomtime profits into high-visibility investments, a number of which turned out to be duds. The prestigious recording studio at World Trade Centre, set up ostensibly to enhance the recording activities at GRAMCO's central Bombay office, was an ill-conceived project which never broke out of the red. In the late '70s moreover, the company spent large amounts on adding to its dismanufacturing capacities, while virtually ignoring cassettes. Both at Dum Dum and Dombivli, modern high-speed presses ensured that the company would have, large underutilised recording facilities. Commented a music distributor: "These were just luxuries they had allowed themselves. But today the decision to pare off these activities is realistic, and in two years time it should be a thriving company."

Last fortnight GRAMCO was paving the way for a quick come-back. In Bombay, record dealers, artistes, film producers and industrymen were brought together on September 6 for a promotional audio-visual show which promised better days to come. In addition, a near-total reshuffle of top management staff around the country was undertaken to revitalise the sleepy organisation. Faced with plunging sales figures, flourishing piracy, and the threat from CBS Records, which will appear on the market next fortnight, it was eminently clear that GRAMCO did not propose to give in without a fight.

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

TARAPUR

Diplomatic Fall-out

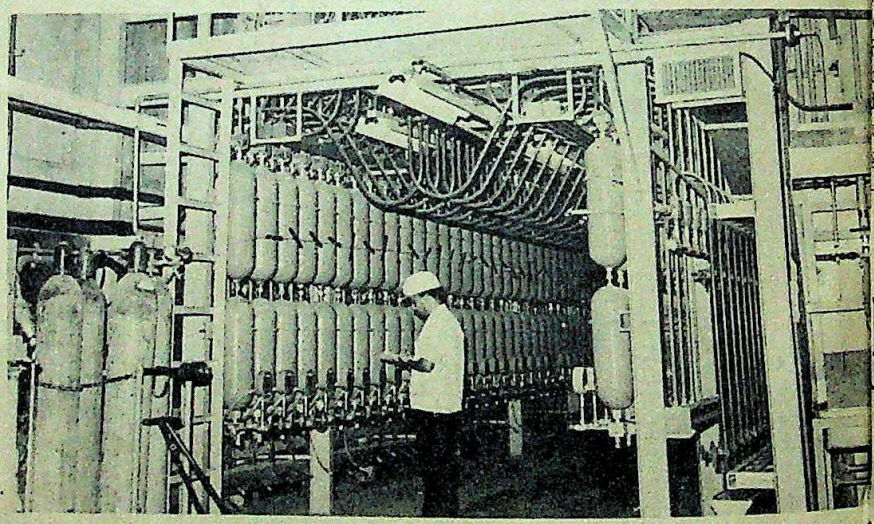
RARELY has a much trumpeted diplomatic triumph blown up in the Government's face the way the Tarapur issue has. Barely a month ago, the compromise agreement on fuel supply for the Tarapur Atomic Power Station was said to mark a new thaw in Indo-US relations. But by last fortnight, the tangled issue was spreading more diplomatic radioactivity than ever, and threatening to poison ties not just with the US but with France as well. What wasn't clear from the mess was whether Indian officials had bungled badly in rushing through with the July compromise, or whether the French had unconscionably altered their stand midstream.

The July accord, reached shortly before Mrs Gandhi left on her American odyssey, stated that France would substitute for the US in supplying partially enriched uranium to keep Tarapur going. This would break the deadlock in which the US insisted on comprehensive safeguards on all nuclear establishments if India were to get American uranium, a condition not stipulated in the 1963 agreement which governs fuel supply for Tarapur.

The underlying assumption in the compromise was that French supply would be within the framework of the relatively soft 1963 agreement, and not insist on the stiffer safeguard conditions now in vogue. But within a fortnight of Mrs Gandhi's return to New Delhi, the French Charge d' Affaires in Delhi, Michael Galas, handed over a letter stipulating stiff safeguards, clearly indicating that France did not see itself as fitting into the 1963 framework.

Angered Response: Reacting in sur and anger, Foreign Secretary M.K. gotra summoned the US Charge d' Aff Marian Creekmore, and delivered the message that it was Washington which suggested France as an alternative supp and that it was now up to the American ensure that France adhered to the framework. Failing that, India would no option but to terminate the agree thus freeing it from all obligations (incl safeguards) on Tarapur.

Other events followed quickly a dispute became embarrassingly publi French team cancelled its visit to Del negotiate the technical details of the su Instead, a more high-powered deleg landed a week later for three days of negotiations, which yielded nothing. up to midway through the talks, I officials seemed to expect France to g gracefully, but this was not to be.



Tarapur Atomic Power Station: uncertain future

Anxious to dispel the impressio India had either bungled or compro itself in striking the July agreement, o have explained that a letter received fr French on July 27 had specifically men that fuel supply would be within the framework. This assurance was appa repeated by the French Foreign M Claude Cheysson, when he came visi early August. This was also stated official release by the US Internat Communication Agency in New Delh

Ambiguous Comments: But Chey comments in public at least were c ambiguous, and not very reass Addressing a press conference durin

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visit, he said: "We want a guarantee fissile material will be subject to the control of the IAEA (International Energy Agency)". The "usual con- f the IAEA means that fuel will be d only if downstream uses of the fuel kept under IAEA safeguards (what is as the "pursuit clause") and further e safeguards would continue even e expiry of the Tarapur agreement in he "perpetuity clause").

ither clause was there in the original ct. There is also reason to believe that nch have insisted on an undertaking dia would not conduct any more blasts. But with both Indian and negotiators declining to meet INDIA there was no confirmation available The French did, however, seem to ffered one concession: India could eprocess spent French fuel (an issue h the US has been very sticky, and emains a point of dispute).

e crucial question in the whole mess ether these conditions were added on rench as an afterthought, or whether d by some inexplicable process failed the French position correctly in e. Indian officials were certainly gui- gnoring the tough French record on nuclear supplies. As a French foreign ministry official told Associated Press in Paris, soon after the dispute became public: "Our nuclear exportation policy is clear and as vigorous as any other country's. We have no intention of changing this policy."

Past Experience: India itself has had some experience of the stiff terms demanded by the French, who are supposed to supply the fuel for the fast breeder test reactor now getting ready at Kalpakkam, near Madras. But despite protracted negotiations, there has so far been no agreement on the terms of the supply.

Given this background, did Indian officials bungle in assuming that France would be soft on safeguards? One assumption made in New Delhi seems to have been that France has a great deal at stake in large contracts from India, including one for the Mirage 2000, which is still to be signed. There will also be pressure on the French to get the issue sorted out before President Mitterrand comes visiting in November. The pressure on the Government at home is as great if not more so, for rarely has there been an issue which has backfired so embarrassingly as this one. But unless one of the two sides comes up with a major compromise, an agreement appears unlikely.

If there is a stand-off, India will have little option other than to terminate the Tarapur pact, a course from which it backed off earlier. Terminating the agreement will almost certainly invite heavy US sanctions (even though India is the aggrieved party and the US the one which has reneged on its obligations). And as recently as last month, Indian officials were dismissing the independent option of using mixed oxide (MOX) fuel, as being too expensive and only a medium-run solution. Also, choosing MOX means closing Tarapur down for a year to effect the switch-over.

Self-reliance: But French uranium will not be cheap either, and will cost roughly twice as much as the US supplies (which were at 1963 prices), raising Tarapur generation costs sharply. And choosing MOX will finally rid the country of the seemingly endless uncertainties over external sources of supply. MOX is also important as a source of fuel for the fast breeder programme.

Whatever compromise the Government may have agreed to internationally, it was certainly keeping its domestic options open: the Cabinet sanctioned an additional Rs 100 crore a few months ago for fully developing the MOX option.

—T.N. NINAN

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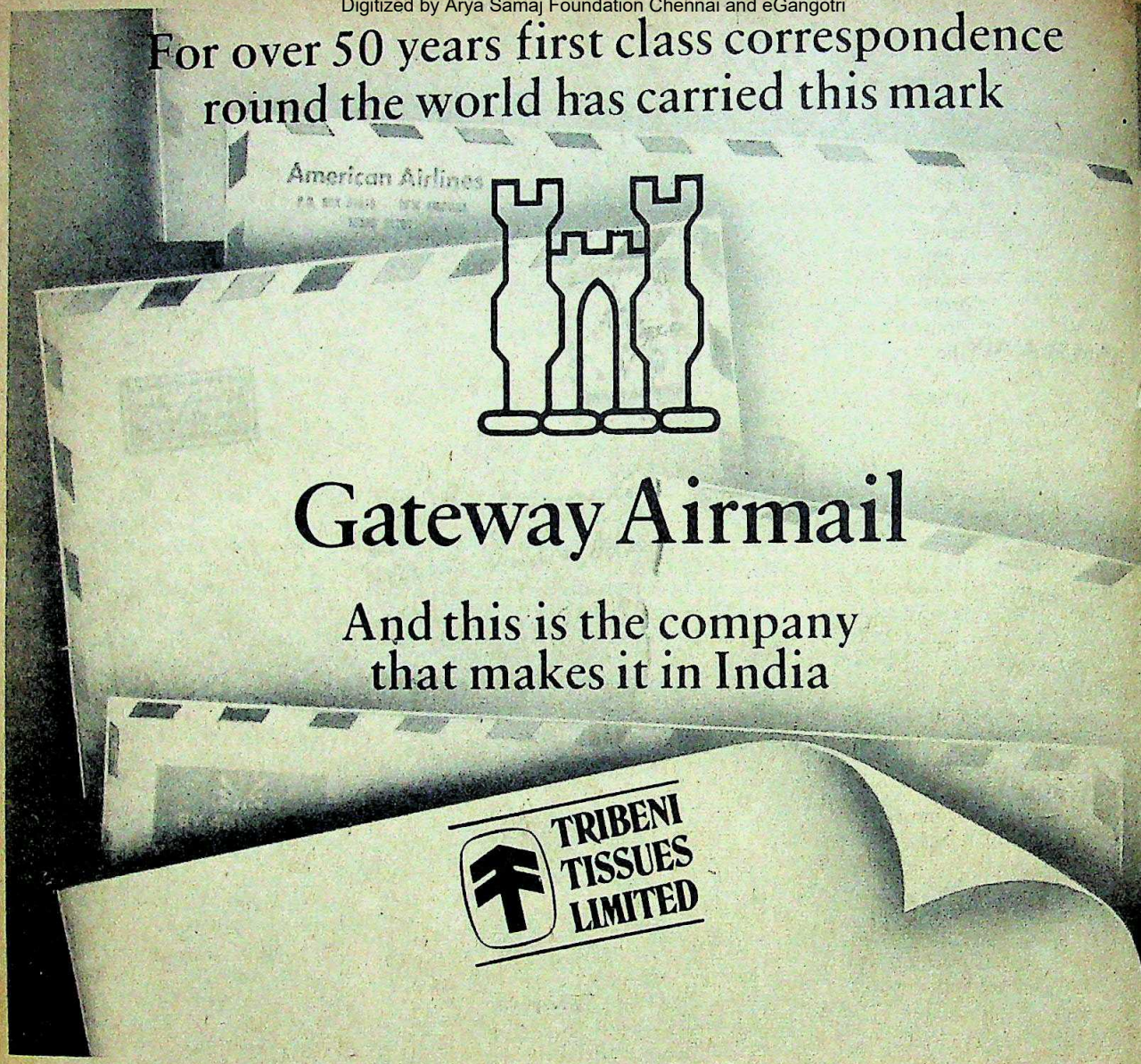

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MMISSION

ne-Man Think-Tank

UREAUCRATS prefer as a rule to be aceless creatures, but there are also he exceptions who leave a clear faction in the areas entrusted to their Seventy-year-old Lakshmi Kant Jha much more than a bureaucrat, but es to prefer low profile activity. eless, there is little doubt that Jha s colleagues on the Economic stration Reforms Commission are emerging as the architects of nd lasting changes in national eco- olicy.

up in March last year with a two- n, the EARC has been functioning as ernment's main think-tank for eco- policy initiatives, submitting eight reports so far on tax policy, g and the monopolies law other things). Jha has also past year shot off a series nal memos and notes to ndhi, aimed at changes in nomic policies. The results evident:

ly this year, the Govern- troduced dual pricing for following up on a recom- on made by Jha last Sep-

ore the Central budget, ested new initiatives to tap ngs of Indians abroad, and nce minister announced a to that effect in his budget

eries of other reports on cy were submitted just before the and Jha admits tersely that they were .

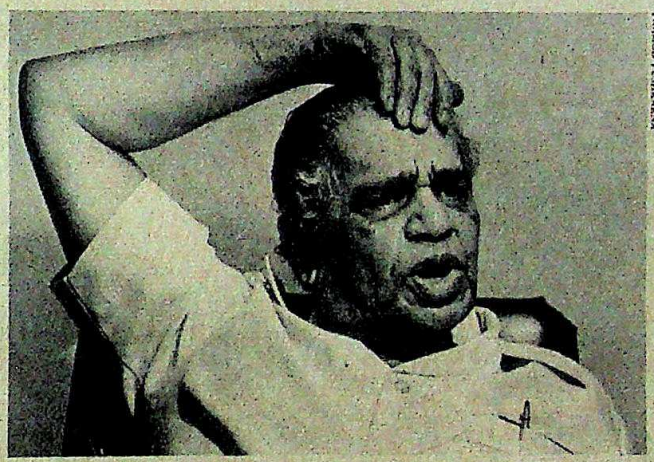
submitted a note on the monopolies interestingly enough an amendment MRTP (Monopolies and Restrictive ractices) Act has now been intro- n Parliament.

also suggested simpler licensing ures, and licensing has speeded up bly.

roposal to raise the salaries of senior sector executives is linked to an on this subject which Jha expressed (and presumably in private as well). also recommended higher prices for ns produced by the public sector, g oil, coal and steel, as a means of resources for that sector. Action on as taken over the past year, marking change in government policy, which favoured under-pricing basic com- s.

Low Profile: INDIA TODAY understands that Jha has submitted close to 50 suggestions on a variety of issues ("I have sent a note every three days or so," says Jha), but he discourages the thesis that he is the architect of many, if not most, of the changes in economic policy witnessed over the past year. "It's the prime minister who has set the direction," he says. "So the changes in policy are what she wanted brought about. All she needs is expert advice, and analysis of various issues. We have provided some of this. But we are not the only advisers." He also dismisses as coincidental the fact that the Government's and his own thinking on various issues have run along parallel lines.

C.H. Hanumantha Rao, who was a member of the EARC till he moved recently to the Planning Commission, is equally vehement in dismissing the suggestion that the Jha Commission is something of a "Super-Cabinet". Rao in fact feels that the EARC has been reduced to the status of "just another commission". But his successor in the EARC, Raja Chelliah, admits that he would not have joined the commission if he thought it did not wield influence.



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Jha: receptive response

Despite underplaying the degree of influence he wields in shaping official policy initiatives, Jha and his commission are now working on a series of other suggestions for action. These include:

► Lower rates for wealth tax, estate duty and the capital gains tax, the effort being to move from a situation of high tax rates on undervalued assets (because of black money transactions) to a regimen of low tax rates on the real value of assets.

Jha will also be sorting out the question of how to treat charitable trusts from the tax point of view if they do not divest their holdings of company shares, and be looking into the more basic question of whether these trusts should be allowed to hold any shares.

► Further changes in licensing procedures will be recommended to speed up clearances.

► A fresh thrust will be made to tap the savings of rich farmers and other sections with surplus cash. Actions will presumably follow once the commission submits its final reports on its formal terms of reference.

Jha is studying a possible move from excise duties to the value added tax, to be incorporated in a proposed amendment to the Excise and Salt Tax Act. Jha and Chelliah had recommended this earlier through the report of the Indirect Taxes Committee. Though Jha denies he is working on the subject again, the finance minister said in Bombay in June that Jha had been advised to submit a fresh report, which would be coming in soon.

He has, meanwhile, submitted a note on the impact of the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act (FERA) on foreign companies in India, but it is doubtful whether the Government will take any action on the subject, except for taking note of Jha's conclusions.

Tough Resistance: But Jha's rise to his pre-eminent role as the most important economic adviser to the prime minister has not been smooth. Many of his proposals have faced resistance in other centres of power, one such case being his suggestion to shift the department of company affairs from the Ministry of Law and Justice to the Industry Ministry. Jha saw this as a way of rationalising functions, but many thought it was aimed at getting the Industry Ministry to administer company affairs more "sympathetically". Whatever the objective, P. Shiv Shanker, the then minister for law, justice and company affairs, fought the proposal tooth and nail at a Cabinet meeting. In a typical side-stepping tactic, the proposal was then referred to a Cabinet committee, which never met. The proposal now seems to have been dropped.

Quizzed on the subject, Jha admits that this is one example of resistance to his proposals, but contends that by and large the initial suspicion in ministerial circles about his role has now given way to cooperation. "The response is on the whole receptive," says Jha. Others in the commission attribute this to the well known fact that Jha, after all, has the prime minister's ear. And as long as things remain that way, he will continue to shape the future of the country's economic policy in important areas. —T.N.NINAN

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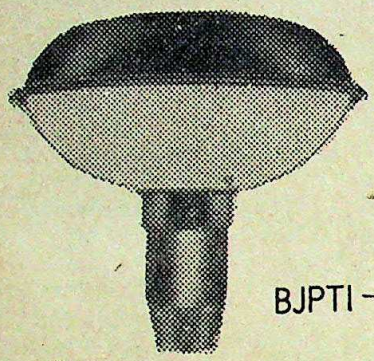

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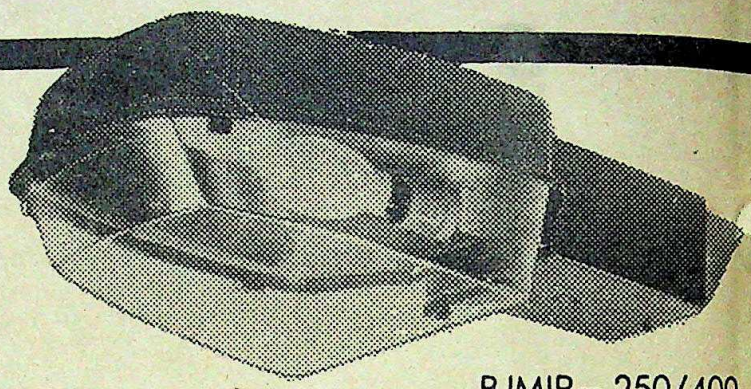

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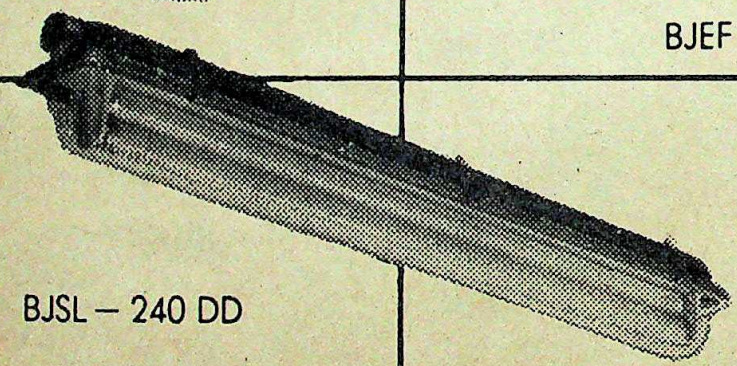

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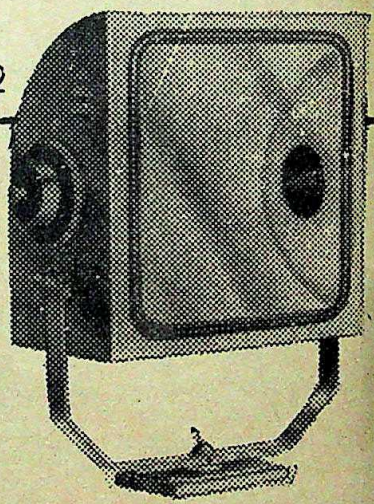

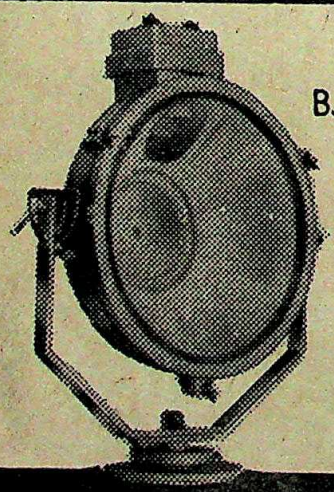

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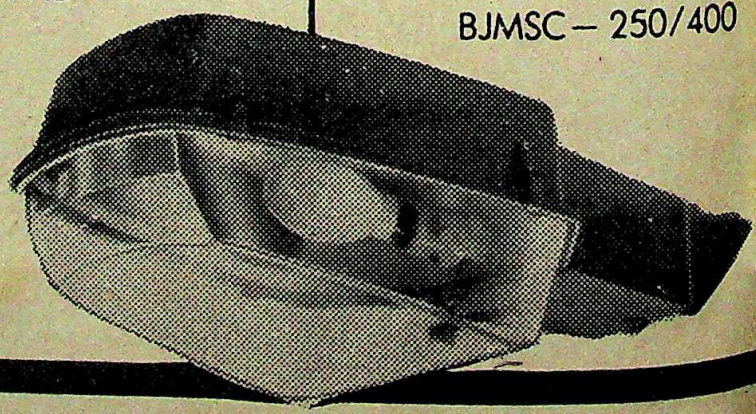

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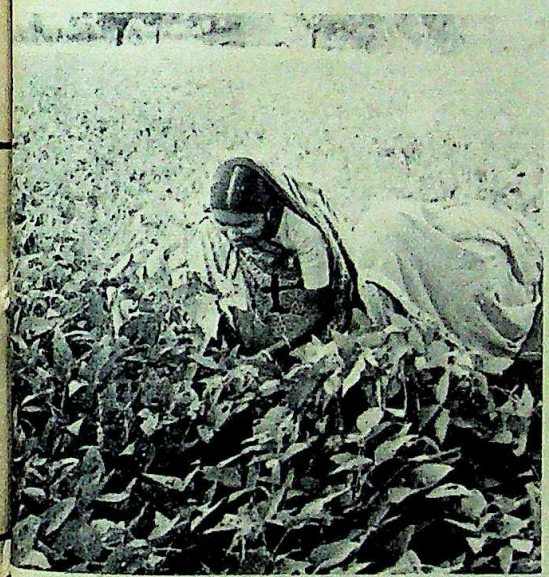
YA PRADESH

oyabean Success

METIME next month when rvesting takes place, a new record ll be set in the fields of Madhya , marking another leap forward for eed, that has grown by spectacular

1970–71, Madhya Pradesh produced ly 1,000 tonnes of soyabean. Five ter, it was still only 39,000 tonnes. 1978–79, the figure had tripled to tonnes, and another three years later ne up four times again to touch the llion tonne mark. This year the figure ted to jump again to 620,000 tonnes. the state produces roughly three- of the national soyabean crop.



Soyabean cultivation: ever-increasing acreage

rdy Crop: The soyabean story is urprising. Soyabeans are hardy, sur- mate extremes and thrive in the otton soil of western Madhya Pra- ys Digvijay Singh, 35, Madhya Pra- griculture minister: "After the recent our and floods, in my constituency in soyabean is the only crop that has d." Singh says that a lot of land which ot be cultivated this year when the ailed is now being brought under n. Thus, of the additional 312,000 brought under soya, nearly a third 00 hectares—is land that was lying se unused during the kharif season. o, farmers are finding that it is more profitable to grow soyabean han, say, groundnut, another kharif Bhupendra Singh, director of the ment of Agriculture, says that on an average, for each hectare of soyabean, a farmer stands to make a net profit of roughly Rs 1,500. This figure in the case of groundnut would be substantially lower—between Rs 1,000 and to Rs 1,200 per hectare. Consequently, while groundnut was the leader among oilseeds till as recently as 1978–79, this year its harvest in Madhya Pradesh will be less than half that of soya.

But even today, there is resistance to using soyabean as cooking oil—80 per cent still goes into vanaspati. Nevertheless, demand too is growing and now matches production. Prices had to be propped up at one stage by NAFED —National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India which arranged to procure roughly 70,000 tonnes in 1978–79 at Rs 175 per quintal, roughly Rs 20 above the then going market price. But last year, when prices of Rs 215 and Rs 230 were offered (for two varieties), procurement was nominal because the market was offering Rs 250 per quintal—and in one place as much as Rs 340 per quintal.

If the crushing units are keen on soyabean, it is hardly surprising. The oil content by weight is less than 20 per cent in soyabean; after processing, almost 75 per cent is left over as de-oiled cake. Since the protein content in soyabean is as high as 50 per cent, the residual oil cake has great demand overseas as cattlefeed—and fetches as much as Rs 2 per kg. In effect, for each quintal of soyabean crushed, the processing unit gets Rs 150 from export alone.

Assistance: Digvijay Singh admits that until recently, governmental assistance has been only nominal but adds that a Centrally sponsored five-year project has been underway since last year, at a cost of Rs 15 crore. Production is expected to double in another three years to roughly 14.50 lakh tonnes. This together with the coming of the Madhya Pradesh State Cooperative Oilseeds Growers Federation Ltd—Oil Fed for short—is expected to give production a boost. Oil Fed is owned jointly by the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), the state Government and oil growers' societies.

Oil Fed is forming oil growers' societies, which it assists by providing expertise and inputs, and also undertakes to buy their produce at market prices. Says Oil Fed's Managing Director M.P. Rajan, 30: "Today we have 133 societies with 10,250 farmers as members but this number is changing almost every week. In another five years we should have 1,250 societies with three lakh members." He admits this is an ambitious target, but thinks it can be achieved because it is more profitable for farmers to join the societies. "Since we provide better seeds and practices, productivity is greater. Secondly, because we procure the product at the farmer's doorstep at the prevailing market prices, it is more convenient for them too."

But however convenient or profitable soyabean is for farmers, the increasing shift to this oilseed raises important questions about Indian agriculture. A major use for soyabean is in the form of de-oiled soya cake, which is exported to the West as cattle feed. Nearly two-thirds of the land under soyabean in Madhya Pradesh was used for growing jowar, millet and a variety of lentils, apart from cotton and groundnut. To this extent, the cultivation of soyabean means less food for Indians.

Rajan of Oil Fed concedes that "It is a criminal waste to export more than 3 lakh tonnes of de-oiled cake annually as cattle feed from a country which suffers from protein deficiency." But his solution is to use soyabean for domestic human consumption after mixing it with flour in bread, biscuits and baby foods. And, he says, Oil Fed is setting up a 12,000-tonne edible flour plant which will be commissioned in 1984.

—SREEKANT KHANDEKAR

MARKETS

Diversification

IT IS surprising how little we know about shareholders, without whom stock exchanges would exist only on paper. It is said that their number has increased fourfold within the last three years or so and there are now probably as many as a million active shareholders in the country—a large bulk operating from towns and cities but an increasing number from what are known as rural areas. If, despite inflation and recession, and the usual vicissitudes of a grow-stop-grow economy, the markets have still some kick in them, it is mostly because of this new crop of investors, many of whom are novices and not yet fully exposed to the intricacies of the markets.

They are biding their time, watching shares go up and down and taking, in the meantime, as much advantage of the situation as possible to get a grip on the market. The convertible bond issues have also recently brought in a fresh crop of

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ACTIVE STOCKS

	High	Low	Close	Change on Fortnight
	1982		6.9.82	
Ashok Leyland	59.00	32.00	35.00	(1.25)
Associated Cement	377.00	212.50	348.50	(4.50)
Bajaj Auto	1,650.00	960.00	1,125.00	(75.00)
Ballarpur	49.60	36.00	42.60	0.30
Bharat Gears	42.00	26.50	28.50	(4.50)
Birla Jute	40.80	26.80	40.80	4.75
Blue Star	38.50	30.00	38.00	(0.50)
Blow Plast	68.00	53.00	61.50	(0.50)
Bombay Dyeing	80.00	62.00	64.00	(5.50)
British Paints	18.69	15.50	15.62	(0.32)
Brooke Bond	26.00	20.20	25.20	(0.60)
Calcutta Electric	18.60	13.30	13.30	(1.45)
Calico Mills	346.00	206.50	206.50	(7.50)
Ceat Tyres	220.00	177.50	200.00	(2.50)
Century Spinning	1,020.00	675.00	742.50	22.50
Chemicals & Fibres	25.00	18.10	19.00	(0.30)
Chloride India	51.00	41.50	49.90	4.15
Colgate	168.00	78.00	79.50	(2.50)
Crescent Dyes	16.20	11.65	12.35	0.25
Delhi Cloth Mills	44.50	31.31	34.12	(0.82)
Dunlop India	22.00	18.30	20.00	0.90
East India Hotels	21.50	16.50	18.25	(3.25)
Elecon	41.00	26.00	33.50	nil
Escorts	49.87	34.25	36.87	(0.13)
Food Specialities	48.00	35.75	46.00	(2.00)
Garware	48.75	27.00	27.00	(14.25)
General Electric	30.50	25.40	28.20	(1.80)
Guest Keen Williams	37.20	28.00	28.00	(1.40)
Gujarat Fertilisers	506.00	368.00	430.00	10.00
Hindustan Aluminium	49.20	30.00	31.30	(0.40)
Hindustan Lever	56.00	47.25	50.50	0.50
Hindustan Motors	32.14	21.82	24.90	(3.16)
Hoechst Dyes	28.00	23.00	24.00	0.50
Indian Aluminium	23.60	17.00	18.15	(0.05)
Indian Cable	25.00	18.00	18.00	(3.25)
Indian Dyestuff	247.50	172.50	215.00	2.50
Indian Explosives	26.00	18.15	18.15	(1.95)
Indian Hotels	107.00	50.00	59.00	1.00
Indian Organic	35.00	26.00	27.00	(2.00)
Indian Oxygen	35.90	26.20	30.25	(0.45)
Ingersoll-Rand	162.00	125.00	162.00	5.00
Ion Exchange	45.00	29.00	31.00	nil
ITC	34.90	21.00	34.60	0.85
Jayshree Tea	36.00	27.50	27.50	(1.70)
J.K. Synthetics	73.20	55.60	60.10	1.00
Kesoram	59.70	45.10	59.70	3.00
Kinetic Engineering	150.00	94.00	112.00	(9.00)
Kothari (Madras)	35.75	20.00	27.00	1.50
Larsen & Toubro	86.00	45.50	51.00	(1.50)
Madura Coats	17.65	14.50	17.25	(0.40)
Mahindra & Mahindra	61.00	38.00	43.00	(0.50)
Motor Industry	272.50	220.00	240.00	nil
Mukand Iron	36.50	22.25	22.25	(3.50)
MRF	29.00	16.50	21.75	(0.50)
National Organic	210.00	168.00	176.00	(2.00)
Nirlon	63.00	37.50	39.25	(0.75)
Orient Paper	48.50	34.50	39.30	0.80
Pelco Electronics	30.30	26.00	26.35	0.35
Ponds India	97.00	58.75	70.00	0.50
Premier Auto	407.00	303.00	346.00	(0.50)
Ranbaxy	29.75	21.00	26.00	(2.00)
Raymond	58.25	33.00	37.00	(1.00)
Reliance	177.00	118.00	163.00	8.00
Shaw Wallace	29.80	27.30	29.60	(0.15)
Shriram Fibres	52.12	41.37	46.94	(5.18)
Siemens	66.00	34.00	38.50	0.50
SPIC	16.00	12.60	15.00	nil
Sylvania & Laxman	31.50	19.00	21.25	(1.50)
Tata Chemicals	59.00	45.50	49.50	(3.00)
Tata Steel	429.00	310.00	347.50	31.50
Telco	737.00	367.00	416.00	36.00
Texmaco	70.75	35.75	37.10	(3.40)
Union Carbide	28.10	23.90	24.80	0.80
Usha Martin Black	33.50	24.10	25.00	1.00
Voltas	291.00	228.00	261.00	(4.00)
Zuari Agro	26.50	18.35	18.35	(1.75)

investors many of whom will become equity shareholders after a year or so. By 1985, the stock markets will be full of people raring to go, and if by that time the markets do not come up to their expectations, sparks will begin to fly.

The current year began with a bang but is likely to end with a whimper. The corporate sector has not done too badly but not too well either, and the credit squeeze has put a damper on expectations. In fact, most of yesterday's traditional leaders—TELCO, Century, Mahindra, Ashok Leyland, Chemicals & Fibres—are no more in the front line and it is doubtful whether they will ever regain their lost position. These scrips have grown a little too fast and have taken a beating, as they were bound to. Tata Steel also does not look as healthy as it used to a few months ago and its best days are probably over. One reason why the market is marking time is that it has not yet found suitable substitutes for the old leaders and may not do so for some time to come, for leaders are not born every day.

Innovators: The 1980s are likely to be dominated by entirely new technologies—electronics is one of them—and new products. Most of the older business groups are still preoccupied with traditional products such as trucks, scooters and such items, but the future does not lie with them. The future lies with small and medium-sized companies that are not very much in the public eye at the moment but will soon be coming into the limelight. Companies with sales of around Rs 20 crore or so have everything going for them, particularly if they have a diversified product range and a flair for innovation.

Do not judge a company by the track record of profitability and assets only. If it is a one-product company, it will soon have problems on its hand. Find out how many new products it has launched and whether it has been able to make a success of it. If so, it is a company worth watching. There are probably no more than about a dozen such companies in the country, but by the end of the 1980s they will be where companies like Escorts, Larsen & Toubro and others are today.

In the short term, the market leaders are as good a bet as any. Cement shares have done exceedingly well in the course of the last few weeks and might do even better. Birla Jute, Raymond, J.K. Rayon, Indian Rayon and one or two companies in the south are good bargains even though some of them may be rather overpriced. Indian Rayon, which has grown very rapidly since Birlas took over, may be in for a bonus issue next year—perhaps of the order of 1 for 1. The company did very well this year but is expected to do better when its projects, currently in the pipeline, go on stream.

WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

Country	Unit & Currency		TT Selling Rates (Rs)	TT Buy Rates (R
Australia	1	As $	9.3455	9.
Austria	100	As Sch	55.6159	55.
Bahrain	1	Dinar	25.2545	25.
Bangladesh	100	Taka	43.0141	42.
Canada	1	Can $	7.7238	7.
Egypt	1	Egp £	11.5349	11.
France	1	Fr Frc	1.3908	1.
Hong Kong	1	HK $	1.6029	1.
Indonesia	100	Rupiah	1.4542	1.
Iran	100	Rial	11.2621	11.
Italy	100	It Lira	0.6924	0.
Japan	100	Jap Yen	3.7616	3.
Kenya	1	K Shilling	0.8772	0.
Kuwait	1	Dinar	33.3026	33.
Malaysia	1	ML $	4.1063	4.
Mauritius	1	Rupee	0.8703	0.
Nepal	1	Rupee	0.7294	0.
Netherlands	1	D Glds	3.5694	3.
Pakistan	1	Rupee	0.7956	0.
Singapore	1	Sing $	4.4998	4.
Spain	100	Sp Pt	8.6699	8.
Sri Lanka	1	Rupee	0.4630	0.
Sweden	1	Sw Kr	1.5669	1.
Switzerland	1	Sw Frc	4.5930	4.
Tanzania	1	T Sch	1.0163	1.
Thailand	100	Baht	42.0000	41.
UK	1	Pound	16.6959	16.
USA	1	US $	9.6725	9.
UAE	1	Dihram	2.6163	2.
USSR	1	Rouble	13.2611	13.
W. Germany	1	DM	3.9062	3.

These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo, Ltd., Delhi and quoted between the banks on September 9.

ECONOMIC TRENDS

PRICES	Latest	
ET Commodity Price Index September 6, 1982*	248.9	(3
Cereals	239.8	(2
Chemicals	308.9	1
Industrial Fibres	x.177.7	
Metals	347.4	(0
Sugar	196.7	(3
Textile Yarns	222.8	(0
Vegetable Oils	287.3	(0
Gold, standard, September 6, 1982 (Rs per 10 gm)	1,680.00	20
Silver, 999, September 6 (Rs per kg)	2,660.00	65
SHARES		
ET Share Price Index September 6, 1982*	228.1	(0
Cement	202.6	3
Chemicals	186.9	(0
Engineering	362.2	(1
Fertilisers	185.0	(0
Man-made fibres	422.4	
Paper	464.5	(1
Rubber Goods	153.8	(1
MONEY		(per c
Money Supply, July 23, 1982		
Bank Deposits		(1
Foreign Exchange Assets		

* 1969-70 = 100

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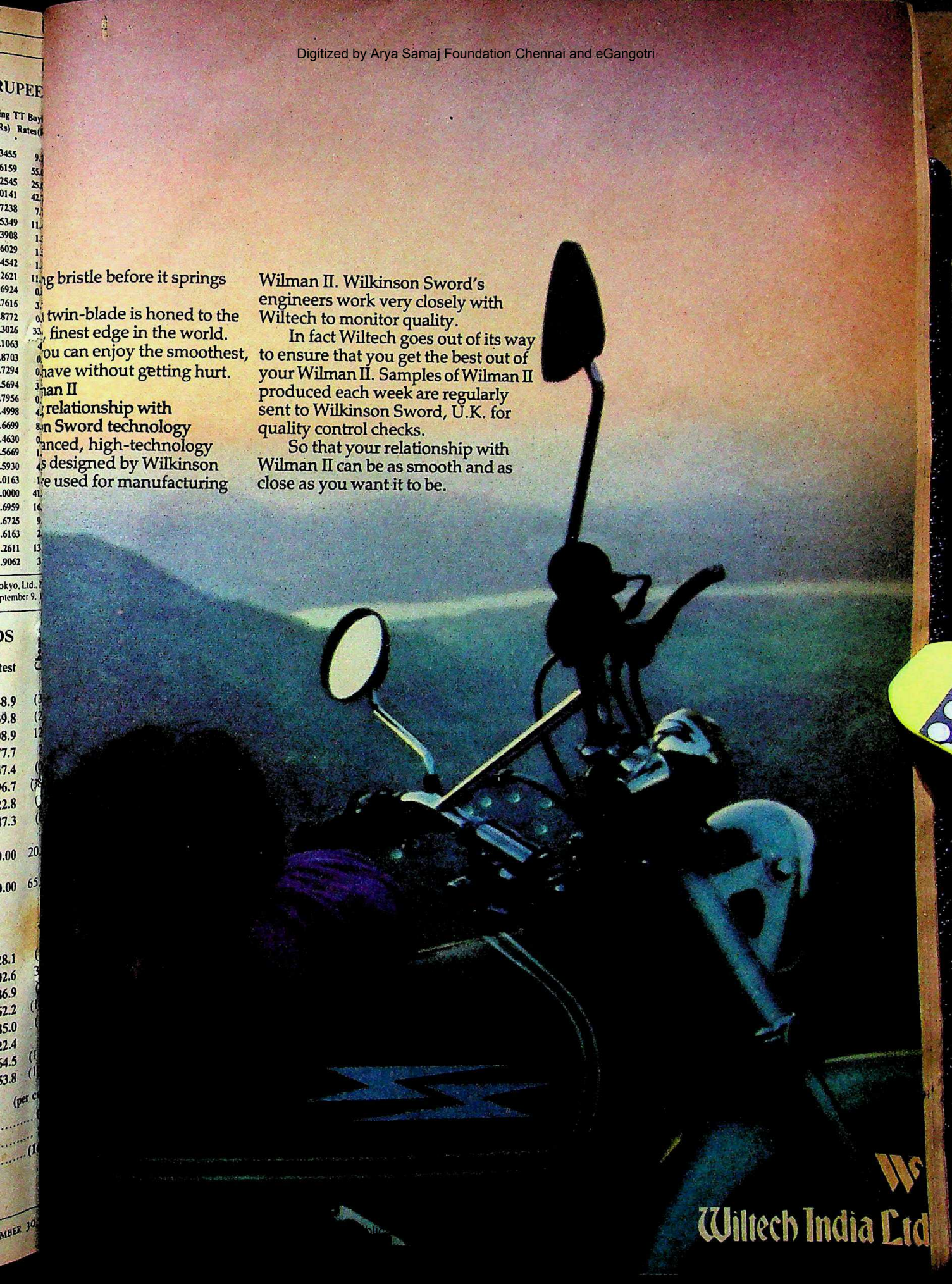

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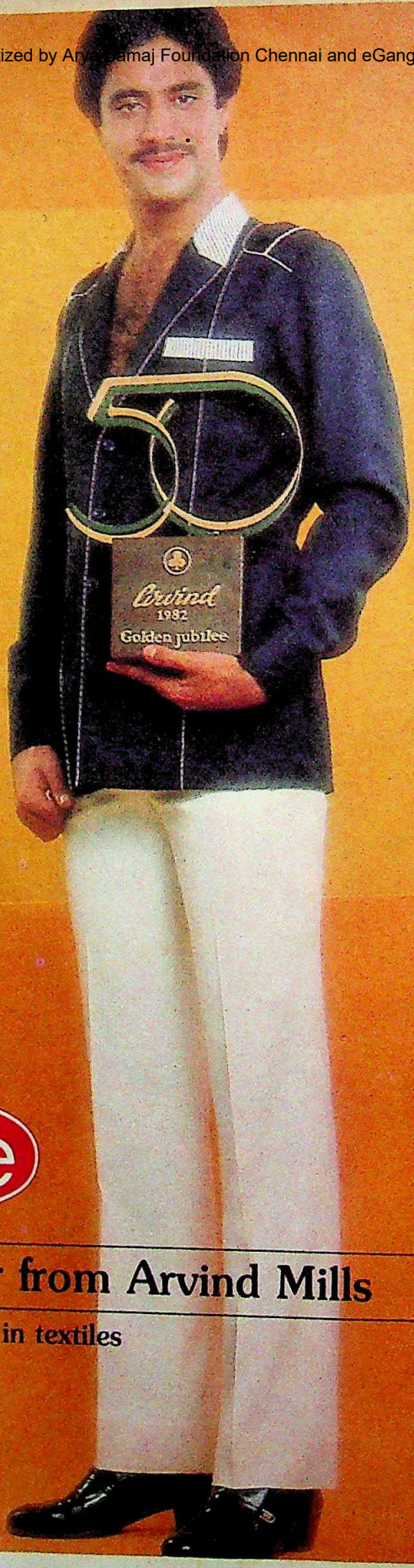

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or Whom The Bill Tolls

NE OF the misconceptions spawned by the Bihar Press Bill is that it will emasculate Bihar's journalists. The truth is that Bihar's lists have already been emasculated ief Minister Jagannath Mishra. Using in methods of patronage and advertit support, Mishra's Government has y subsidised an explosion of small across the state—the very papers now held up as examples of "yellow journa—and, worse still, taken no steps unisting defamation and obscenity laws alise erring papers.

he bill is therefore going to confer the mercies of Bihar's constabulary on a ly small group of reporters in Patna. journalists have relentlessly, through tside or "national" press, been amg country-wide the infernal din set up skeletons in Mishra's cupboards. If ng, the Bihar press has time and again a tolerant and unseeing eye on the s that blight Bihar—atrocities against ns, a rocketing crime graph, the enment of criminal gangs in all parts of te, and the public tendency to justify pport barbarities like the Bhagalpur gs. In this, Bihar's press has fitted in e first law of journalism, enunciated mer *New York Times* staffer Tom : "The press always accurately re- he community it is operating within." hen asked by INDIA TODAY to cite examples of scurrilous, obscene or ailing journalism, Jagadanand Jha, te's flat-footed director of public re- offered only some weak examples iny papers tucked away in Bihar's st corners. It was clear therefore that ar Government was being very clever its real reasons for the bill—it would d not against Bihar's mofussil press ainst larger papers that had a nationirculation. These newspapers and ma- s have been Mishra's most implacable onsistently peeling off layer after layer ruption, maladministration and ve- from his adipose government.

ooming Industry: Outside of the small of Patna journalists, and a couple of eous editors like Dhanbad's Bank- Mishra (*see box*) the press in Bihar er the years, become a booming *kutir* (cottage industry). Mishra has played an role in bringing about a situation every "respectable" inhabitant in Bihar town flaunts his journalistic claiming to be a stringer for some

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Small-town journalists protesting in Patna: already emasculated?

"major" paper or the other, and where "small papers" sprout overnight like toadstools after a tropical rainstorm.

In Muzaffarpur town, for instance, there are, according to the district authorities' wavering estimates, between 60 and 100 papers. There are as many as 16 papers purportedly published from Muzaffarpur's own Fleet Street—Sahu Road. Radha Mo-

E.M. KISHAN

Dinanath Jha: symbolic father-figure

han Thakur, for instance, owns a printing press on this street—as well as five papers: the daily *Pratah Kamal*, and four weeklies: *Bimal Vani, Hajipur Times, Mashwara-e-Awam*, and *Bagmati Dak*.

On most days, Thakur's office is deserted save for the press manager. No copies of any paper except *Pratah Kamal* are available. Thakur happens to be a teacher in the Harihar Narayan Girls' High School. Muzaffarpur's budding Rupert Murdoch says that he survives purely on government advertising. "We are supporting the Press Bill," he says smugly. *Pratah Kamal* was launched only a few months back, but already Thakur is carrying large advertisements from the Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity (DAVP) in Delhi and the North-Eastern Railway. Any day now, he expects to be put on the "approved list" for Bihar Government advertisements.

Impotence: Umesh Chandra Alakh, 49, runs a tiny printing press and a weekly paper called *Bihar Mail* out of the compound of the Santoshi Maa temple in the centre of Muzaffarpur. Formerly a teacher in Vaishali, Alakh says his paper prints "what we get". He has not actively opposed the Press Bill in his paper. "How can a small paper like mine do so?" he asks. "We are scared of the repercussions. How can small papers resist this dictatorship if the big papers in Patna accept government advertisements but protest by not printing Jagannath Mishra's statements?"

Alakh is only too right. Except for the *Indian Nation* and *Aryavarta*, whose owner Subheshwar Singh has been gunning for Mishra, all the other four major dailies in Patna have been following contradictory policies in their struggle against the bill, although they ostensibly lead the Journalists' Action Committee (JAC). On September 8, two days before the Bihar bandh, called by 11 opposition parties to protest the Press Bill, the four dailies—*Searchlight, Pradeep, Aaj* and *Janshakti*—carried huge solus advertisements on the front page from the

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JAGADANAND JHA

Tough Talk

JAGADANAND Jha is proving to be an exemplary torch-bearer in Jagannath Mishra's hysterical vendetta against the press. Much of Mishra's recent media policy appears to have been shaped by Jha, who holds the dubious distinction of being only the second non-Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer in Bihar's history to reach the post of director of public relations. Jha served very briefly in the same post in 1977 before Mishra's ministry fell under the Janata onslaught; he was promptly brought back when Mishra regained the chief ministership in 1980.

"Journalists are not competent arbitrators of the Press Bill," says Jha. "The agitation is now being taken over by hooligans. Assuming Mishra has made a mistake and the Bill is bad in law, why have the journalists returned only their accreditation cards and not all the other benefits they have got from the Government? Why have they not stopped writing entirely to show their anger?"

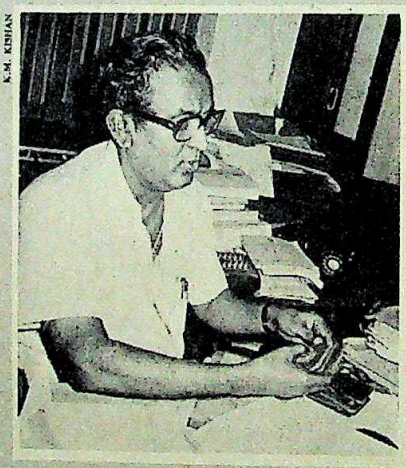
Jha is very busy these days, collecting as much "evidence" of "scurrilous, grossly indecent and blackmailing" journalism as he can for a White Paper the Government will publish soon to counter its critics' arguments. All of the examples are from the myriad rags that emerge from Bihar's towns. Why did Jha not take action against such papers earlier under existing laws? Why does the Government issue them advertisements? The director becomes apoplectic. "Advertisement disbursal was centralised in my hands only last year," he says, "and we have not yet evolved a proper method to penalise erring papers. In any case existing laws are useless. You journalists think you are above the law; you are all crooks. Admit it and face the punishment."

Crude Justification: Jha is adamant that the Press Bill will not be misused against "good" papers. He has interesting analogies to offer in support of this point. "There are laws banning illegal firearms and rape, and in rare cases they are misused," he says. "But does this mean we should abolish the Arms Act and the Criminal Procedure Code? Every man is born with a sexual organ that is an instrument of rape. Does it mean he goes out and rapes the first woman he sees on the road?"

Once upon a time, long before the earthy, rough spoken Jha graced Bihar's Secretariat, he was a humble translator in the *Indian Nation*. Today his vitriol against that paper has no limits. "The paper's owner Subheshwar Singh is quarrelling with the chief minister," he says, "and that is why they are leading the anti-Bill agitation. Tomorrow if Singh patches up with Mishra the agitation will collapse."

Why has it taken Jha so long to begin collecting evidence in support of Mishra's allegations against the press? "I am working alone," he says mournfully, "and slowly. But there are thousands of people all over the country working against the Bihar Government."

Men of Jha's calibre are part of the devilish brains trust advising Mishra these days. He has no answer when he is asked why he does not criticise the dozens of in depth, well-documented



K.M. KISHAN

Jha: hatchet man

reports that have appeared in the national press, exposing a Bihar that under Mishra's rule has become living hell. Nevertheless, Jha expends all his energies on drafting huge advertisements supporting the Bill, on supervising the printing of thousands of posters and pamphlets broadcasting Mishra's venom against the press, and on as siduously listing so-called journalistic misdemeanours.

That the Government is supremely confident about the Bill becoming law is evident in Jha's rude, hectoring behaviour towards the press. "When the Bill becomes law," says he smugly, "I will vet all the papers, and pick out the guilty ones. Then the Law Department will prepare the case against the journalists, and the Home Department will prosecute them. We shall see how cocky the press is then."

Government's Department of Informa and Public Relations (DIPR). The adver ment said the bandh was being organise "anti-social elements", and exhorted people to oppose it. To top it all, *Jansh* is the organ of the Communist Party of I (CPI) which is one of the members of 11-party front.

The Bihar Government has seize these contradictions in the press by lau ing a propaganda blitz against it. "Onc bill becomes law," says Jagadanand "any Tom, Dick and Harry can challen in the Supreme Court. Let the courts d whether the law is right or wrong."

Willing Abettor: What Jha omits tioning is the fact that any Tom, Dick Harry in Bihar can start a paper overn The Registrar of Newspapers for India in Delhi as a matter of course register hundreds of applications for publications pouring in from Bihar. A would-be publisher has to do is to small press with hand-set types and a tr printing machine, set up shop, and brin a few shabby issues.

A chartered accountant's certi vouching for the paper's circulation—w is more often than not vastly inflated fices to put it on the DAVP's advertise list. If the paper appears continuous six months, the Bihar Police carry cursory check of the owner's antece and it is then placed on the list for adv ments from the state's DIPR. Except f six leading dailies in Patna, therefore, Bihar's burgeoning mofussil press thriv government advertisements.

In July last year, the issuance Bihar government advertisements wa tralised; this meant that the papers wou advertisements only if the DIPR in released them. Before then, advertise were issued by the concerned depart either in Patna or at district headquart the local papers.

ONCE a paper gets on to the adve ment list, however, it is very monitored for circulation and tent. In many cases, the newspaper o themselves admit that they print only copies to send to the DIPR and other tisers, and sell their newsprint allocati the black market.

Whether the small papers pri famatory or scurrilous matter or no Government is hard put to explain w follows such an uncoordinated adver policy. There are currently 263 publica on the DIPR's approved list; six of the the big dailies in Patna, which means th remaining 257 are all small papers scat through the state.

As for the police verific

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NKHANDI MISHRA

A Profile in Courage

THE PAPER's masthead says it all. *Chunouti* means 'challenge', and editor-proprietor Bankhandi Mishra, 50, has established a reputation the hellish town of Dhanbad that could vide a textbook case-study for any raguered Bihar journalist—and a grim ning of the harassment the Press Bill bring in its wake.

On June 10 this year, Mishra was ping in his lungi and vest in the mped, run-down quarters in Jharia's hhminiya Mode area that house both small press and his family—a wife and aughter—when there was a com- tion at his door. At 1.30 a.m. in the ht, Mishra was arrested by constables ru Prasad Yadav and Tarni Prasad dav of the Jharia police station and led off half-clothed to a dingy cell in dcuffs and chains.

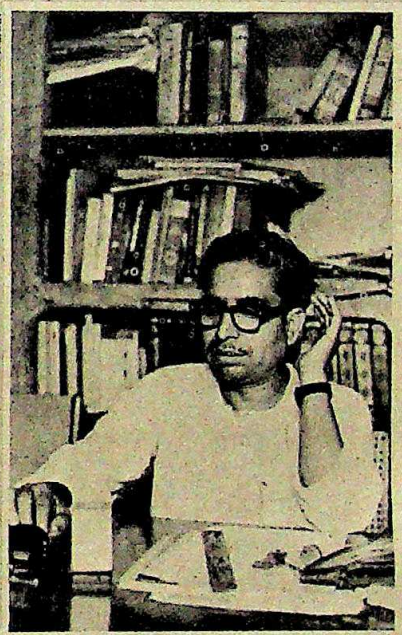
Mishra was told that one of his ployees, Surat Lal Jha, had com- ined in writing that the editor was not ing wages and threatening his wor- s. Later, Jha told Mishra that his nature had forcibly been taken on a nk sheet of paper. The police also told hra that they were following up an old against him. Some years back, hra and some friends had founded a college in Jharia; there was a falling- among the founders, Mishra was ely accused of misappropriation of ds, and arrested. He obtained bail in case, but there was no reason at all at point of time to arrest him again as police did.

Consistent Exposures: The truth was Bankhandi Mishra had bucked the anbad system all too often. In an ironment where criminal gangs exert ifying influence over the coal-miners' tched lives, where men are killed in en daylight and their killers are never nd, and where corruption, squalor despair have become commonplace, hra has consistently carried reports in paper—a four-page evening broad- et, the only one of its kind in ar—that unfailingly reveal the truth invite the wrath of the powerful es that control the Dhanbad-Jharia- ras coalbelt.

Mishra believes that his arrest is ctly linked to *Chunouti*'s exposure of Das murder case. On April 29 this r. S.S. Das, a young Calcutta-based auditor who was inspecting the books of Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) Area 6, was brutally murdered; his body was thrown beside the track on the Dhanbad-Gaya line, and the local papers reported the death as an accident.

Mishra was away from Dhanbad when Das died. His interest was aroused when he read the news on his return two days later. The doughty editor set to work at once, and on May 3, much before any other paper, *Chunouti* front-paged a report saying that Das had actually been murdered.

Repercussions: The case hit the national headlines a few days later and eventually resulted in the arrest of A.H. Khan, an accountant in the Area 6 office of BCCL. Shortly thereafter, Mishra received a threat from a man who said he



K.M. KISHAN

Mishra: unbowed

was representing Akhlaq Ahmad, a Janata Party MLA from Rohtas and Khan's brother-in-law.

Mishra was kept in detention for two days after his arrest, and taken in chains to the court where he obtained bail. When he returned home he found that the police had systematically ransacked his home and office, broken the lock on a drawer, and removed a file containing all of the evidence Mishra had collected on the Das murder. The police also threw away or damaged the type-faces in Mishra's press and threatened his workers with dire repercussions if they continued in *Chunouti*'s employ. To this day, Mishra has not been able to get enough compositors together to bring out the paper again.

Time and again, Mishra has given senior police officials of the district the names and details of crimes that have occurred in his vicinity. On many occasions, the men he named, he says, have come to his house to intimidate him. "How can you trust the police if they are so involved with the criminals?" he asks. Nevertheless, *Chunouti*'s front page often carries advertisements inviting readers to send in any information to the paper that will expose some wrong-doing and promising to keep their identities confidential. Mishra's paper was initially a weekly, launched in 1973. During the Emergency, the intrepid editor was forced to down shutters, but revived it in 1977. On March 4 this year, Mishra converted the paper into an eveninger.

Ironical Position: There are ironies in Mishra's situation. He hails from a village near Saharsa town and is distantly related to Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra. Deeply committed to the Socialist doctrines of Ram Manohar Lohia, Mishra says he will never seek succour from the chief minister. "Bihar's tragedy is largely caste-based," he says, "and I couldn't even ask opposition leader Karpoori Thakur to bring up my arrest in the Assembly because the policemen who arrested me were from a backward caste. I belong to the Maithili Brahmin sect, and people would say I was biased against the Yadavs."

BCCL officials privately admit that *Chunouti* is read avidly for the wealth of information it offers. The arrest itself has been an important lesson for Mishra. "It has only strengthened me," he says, "but I know how desperate my opponents can get." He is pessimistic about how united a struggle the press can wage against the Bihar Press Bill. "Both the Government and the journalists are trapped in a blind alley," he says, "and knowing the kind of weak press existing in Bihar, the Government will smash our unity."

He is more hopeful about his own future. Spurred on by his determination to revive *Chunouti*, he says, a few friends of his have offered to pool their funds to enable the purchase of a modern press. "Before I started *Chunouti*," says Mishra, "I used to be a public relations officer with the Directorate-General of Mines Safety. That's how I get my stories—I know every official of any worth, and I get to see any file I want." Already, Mishra has patched together, with the help of a handful of young assistants, a makeshift press. On September 17, he says, his very Brahmin father will perform the Vishwakarma Puja and *Chunouti* will once again trundle off the press.

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of publishers' credentials, government spokesmen cannot explain how one of Dhanbad's most notorious citizens, an alleged criminal called Jabbar Mian who has 36 cases pending against him, launched a paper called *Jharia Samachar* a few months back.

There is no denying the grim fact that the average Bihar journalist is operating in a milieu where crime, political racketeering and governmental pressure combine to prevent free and fair reporting. Economically, too, journalism ranks slightly above bonded labour in wages. Most papers claim to have stringers in every district of the state, but they are very often reimbursed only for their postage and paper expenses, and not paid for their reports. Even the *Indian Nation*, which claims a state-wide circulation of 60,000, has only a few "staff correspondents" who are paid an absymal Rs 16 a day when they go out of town on assignment. Editor Deenanath Jha says that the paper's finances do not permit payment of more than Rs 15 per column of matter to mofussil correspondents.

Jha, who heads the JAC and has become the anti-Press Bill agitation's symbolic father-figure, says that his paper's correspondents are mostly lawyers or teachers in small towns. "They are respected citizens," he says, "and enjoy access to the district magistrate and the superintendent of police. And they are proud of working for us."

Justification: Lawyers and teachers and Bihar's teeming mofussil journalists can hardly be expected to travel to trouble spots, to investigate stories thoroughly, and to take stands that are critical of the Government. "National dailies like the *Times of India* play up every Harijan massacre in Bihar on their front pages," says Jha, "but we feature such news on page 5—for us it is provincial news. *Indian Nation* is a sober, clean and effective paper." When asked why his Bhagalpur correspondent did not report the blindings of the undertrials, Jha gives the excuse that the reporter did not belong to Bhagalpur but to Purnea in Katihar ditrict.

Faced by such odds, therefore, the more percipient journalists in Patna realise that the movement against the Press Bill can survive and exert pressure on the Government, only if it expands outward to include the larger public. A marathon 22-hour meeting in Patna last week resulted in an unprecedented unity resolution by as many as 17 youth organisations. The joint youth front took a giant stride beyond the watermark of Jayaprakash Narayan's 1974 movement when representatives of every conceivable political loyalty—ranging from the CPI to the Bharatiya Janata Party—joined hands. At the meeting's end, it became apparent that the anti-Press Bill agitation had become a tremendous catalyst in Bihar's volatile chemical equation. The students have decided to collect a million signatures on a petition against the bill, and to organise a huge gherao of the Raj Bhavan on October 12.

Snowballing Movement: The journalists in Patna were only too aware that their movement could be swamped by the opposition parties, who had eagerly jumped onto the anti-Press Bill bandwagon. Nevertheless, a core group of half-a-dozen journalists in Patna continued to organise support for an agitation that they estimate will continue for at least six months. The transformation from journalists into activists has taken its toll—the reporters have not filed a word of copy since mid-August, and their earnings have dropped sharply. Currently, apprehending arrest by the Mishra Government on some trumped-up charges, the journalists are busy collecting money for a fund which will sustain arrested colleagues' families during their incarceration.

Under the benign leadership of senior journalists like Deenanath Jha, therefore, the anti-Press Bill agitation is quickly snowballing into a state-wide, people-based movement that seems, at least now, to be poised to outstrip the 1974 agitation in its power. The press has become an ideal pivot for the mass unrest seething below Bihar's surface, since the press is, in the end, non-partisan and closer to the average man. There have been aberrations in the movement, as for instance in Dhanbad, where the Patrakar Sangharsh Samiti is presided over by Brahmdev Singh Sharma, editor of the town's leading daily *Awaaz*. District officials are quick to point out that *Awaaz*, immediately after the Press Bill was passed, carried an editorial supporting it.

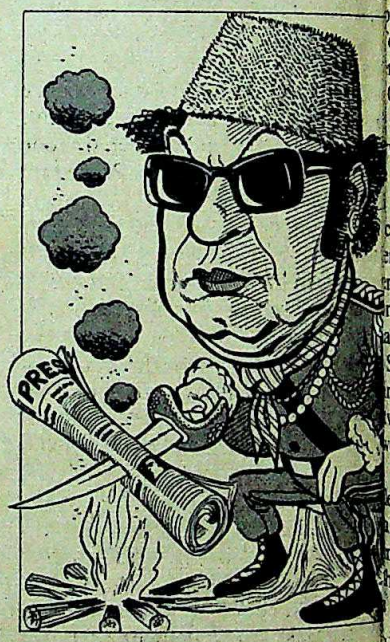
The struggle is therefore confined to those Bihar journalists who sense the bill's larger potential. Mishra's Government is already out to prove that jackboots did not go out of fashion with World War II. On September 9, thousands of hooligans led by Congress(I) leaders took out a procession in Patna to agitate against the bandh. The same day, *Searchlight*'s Correspondent Barun Banerjee was arrested at Ghatsila and paraded in handcuffs before Jamshedpur's Chief Judicial Magistrate M.L. Visa. Banerjee is convenor of the Ghatsila Action Committee against the Press Bill.

It was clear, as the fortnight drew to an end, that the bill had become a massive time bomb ticking under every journalist's chair throughout the nation. Worried at the tremendous backlash against the bill throughout the country, many of Jagannath Mishra's colleagues in Patna were privately dismayed at the possibility that the very press that Mishra once fawningly cultivated during the Janata regime could now spell the end of his political career. —CHAITANYA KALBAG

TAMIL NADU

Subtle Suppressio

THE NATION-WIDE protes
inst the draconian anti-pres
has had a delayed impact on
Nadu. In a belated move las
night, journalists covering the state A
ly registered their indignation against
month-old amendment to the Indian
Code (IPC) and the Code of Cr
Procedure (Tamil Nadu) Act 1981,
made "scurrilous or indecent" wri
cognisable offence punishable by imp



ment varying between two and five yea
legal measures to browbeat journalis
ted with the promulgation of an ord
on September 21, 1981, which am
Section 292-A of the IPC, which d
offences under this section cognisa
non-bailable. Barring a few dissenti
ces, the entire media community of
Nadu kissed the rod dutifully.

The stern action is quite superfl
the press corps in Tamil Nadu quite
follows the survival procedure set du
Emergency: they crawl when asked t
It has been noticed repeatedly that m
of the Central Cabinet who cannot g
line edgewise into the capital's dailie
their most innocuous statements on th
pages of Tamil Nadu's newspapers.
the state police circulate hand-outs a
few unidentified "Naxalites" being sh
in an encounter, neither the reporter

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ses the relevant question: how is the sure of the victim's political affi- hen even the identity has not been ed?

ia Apathy: Such is the situation in that even after Chief Minister machandran (MGR) enacts legis- uzzling the press, he is still hailed in media as "God's gift to the Tamil and "the greatest revolutionary the ever produced". The extent of the pathy about their own rights can be he fact that MGR's 'adviser' on elating to the Fourth Estate at the ordinance was promulgated was maswamy, president of the Indian on of Working Journalists.

il Nadu's indifference to press free- an old one. When the infamous Press (Objectionable Matter) Act, sed on January 31, 1956, and was ormal burial the following year by nt, politicians in Madras felt vul- C. Subramaniam, the then finance in the K. Kamaraj government, ward with the Indian Penal Code Code of Criminal Procedure Amendment) Act, 1960, which currilous or grossly indecent writ- ended for blackmail" punishable nhanced imprisonment or fine. The n, which was to be the forerunner of ar enactments in Bihar and Orissa, Section 292-A into the IPC and nting of scurrilous matter punish- wo years' imprisonment. The off- ever, was then non-cognisable and

e the Kamaraj government made l of the Centre's Press Act the ng circumstance for the legislation he press, MGR's move to constrict was explained by different, even reasons. The statement cited cer- ons for this harsh step necessary to media's scurrilous writing "which eatly the morale of public servants charge of their duties," and which ed of late to be on the increase". gly, when the draft ordinance was to Governor Sadiq Ali not a single on containing this kind of writing ched to the claim.

utable Evidence: That the morale of ervants in the All India Anna Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) ent is low is undeniable—but the r this is not quite what the official ays. It started in 1980, when MGR to withdraw the state's whimsical on policy. It was decided that ar- ps would be opened throughout the the middle of 1981 and licences e granted to manufacturers and ers. Members of the opposing Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) started collecting irrefutable evidence that licences were not being granted on merit alone. They based the allegations on the fact that N. Hari Bhaskar, a brilliant commissioner for excise and prohibition of unimpeachable reputation, proceeded on long leave because he was not allowed to take independent decisions. Bhaskar was promptly replaced by R. Subramaniam, an Indian Administrative Service officer ranked 139th on the state's seniority roll, who disposed of all the applications swiftly.

Probe Requested: On September 18, 1981, 22 Tamil Nadu MP's, belonging to the DMK, the Congress(I) and the Muslim League and 30 state legislators presented two separate, but identical, memoranda to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi stating that liquor licences had been issued to vested interests from outside the state and that Rs 17.50 crore had changed hands in the process. They also requested a thorough probe. If the contents of the memoranda had percolated southwards and were published in the local press, the morale of the newly-appointed commissioner would have been sure to take a beating. The blanket ordinance of September 1981 took care of that and of any future hesitation civil servants might have about carrying out the ruling party's bidding. As a logical follow-up, the Government issued an order on September 24 forbidding officials from giving information to the press except on non-controversial matters like the storage level in tanks and warnings about epidemics and floods.

WHEN the bill to replace the ordinance was presented to the legislature, the Opposition went through the mandatory motions of disapproval. Condemning the bill, the Congress(I)'s T. Ramamurthy waxed eloquent about the attempt being made to gag the press. The DMK, the Congress(I) and the Muslim League even walked out of the Assembly in protest. Interestingly enough, during the debate in Parliament on the Bihar Press Bill, which is a faithful copy of the Tamil Nadu one, none of these parties joined the Opposition walkout.

With the opposition to the bill being half-hearted, MGR had little difficulty in getting the Assembly to pass it. Defending the bill, MGR said in the Assembly on Feburary 12, 1982: "There is no intention to curb the freedom of the press but I want that every newspaper should have a sense of fear.... The Government wants to use it (the bill) to correct the attitude of certain newspapers... some newspapers like *Ethiroli* publish reports for which they cannot be penalised under the existing laws...." The reference to *Ethiroli* was not a chance re-

James Bond Box

This is not an empty James Bond brief-case. In fact, this brief-case contained Rs 2.5 lakh meant for DMK party. M. Kannappan, and C.T. Dendapani handed over a brief-case to Mr Karunanidhi at Chidambaram Park Stadium, Coimbatore (no date given).

—English translation of the news item carried by the *Makkal Kural*, a pro-AIADMK Tamil daily dated September 9, 1982.

Donations Given To Karunanidhi Not Accounted For

In an item published on August 28, 1982, *Makkal Kural* said that the DMK working committee in its resolution had accused Karunanidhi of not depositing in the party account the gold, silver and cash collected by him. The paper also alleged that the money raised at various district levels had not been handed over to the DMK. It also charged Karunanidhi with making false public statements in which he had declared that the donations were actually deposited in the party's accounts. Curiously, the newspaper does not give the date on which the resolution was adopted by the DMK working committee.

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THE HARDWORKING MINIATURE

OR

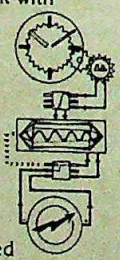
How the work of 3,000 components has been taken over by a single thumb-nail sized chip.

For a better working watch.

The LSI chip is a very small and extremely complex electronic circuit inside your watch. It consists of a large number of component parts, built into each other on a single base plate, the chip. Which, in effect, means that the watch, with fewer components, is a lot more reliable, and weighs very little as well.

Chipping in to work

The LSI teams up with the Quartz crystal piece and the battery, to do its work with clockwork precision.



Powered by a battery, the crystal begins to vibrate at 32,768 oscillations per second. A trimmer helps set the vibrations to this frequency. This frequency is technically considered the most suitable for watches.

The LSI then proceeds to divide these oscillations of electronic pulses. And comes up with one very accurate pulse per second.

Urged on by the LSI chip, the stepper motor gets busy. It converts the pulse into mechanical motion. And drives the second hand through mechanical train gears—precisely once a second.

So that the hands on the conventional dial show the *exact* time.

Working small miracles

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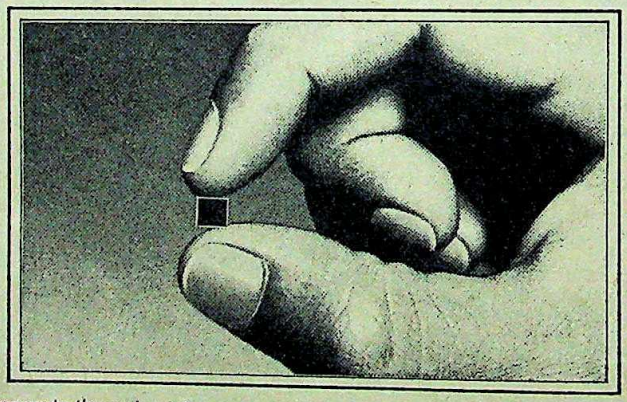

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New Year's Day this year, the
ested Arcot Veerasamy, managing
of the Tamil eveninger, T.P.
shrian and N. Srinivasan, its direc-
the Editor, Khilji, for a report
in *Ethiroli*'s October 15, 1981
They were brought before the
l Metropolitan Magistrate, N.
who remanded them to custody till
0.

offending edition had carried a
Health Minister H.V. Hande ac-
Premier Padmini car in exchange
ing a medical college seat.
ort even mentioned the re-
number of the car. Hande made no
either did he file for defamation
tion 199 of the Criminal Procedure
ough the Press Registration Act
n that the editor is entirely re-
for what is published in the paper,
st time since Independence, direc-
e company were arrested. Luckily
they were all released after produc-
onal surety. The managing director
litor were again arrested on June 2
et out on bail the next day. The two
sted for the third time two days
were held in jail for a fortnight
r the police to file a charge-sheet.
applications were vigorously op-
the Government.

rnment Wrath: Another paper to
rath of the AIADMK Government
alem edition of another eveninger,
urasu. On July 31 this year, the
ied an unobtrusive report about
of a local school being sick after
chief minister's free mid-day meal.
rt had it that the children had
nd there had been traces of blood.
wing morning the report was pic-
y the *Thina Malar*. The Salem
ollector, R. Varadarajulu, issued a
ing that there had been no traces
nd that the vomiting had nothing
h the free meal. *Malai Murasu*
denial on August 1.

aturday, August 7, the police arres-
artheesan, editor of the paper's
tion and Paramakrishnan, the re-
he article. They were held in jail till
when they were allowed to move
application. Strangely, neither the
r the correspondent of the *Thina*
hich had not carried the denial,
ted.

what astounded everybody was
indu on August 12 carried a double
rticle on the front page entitled,
Poisoning Rumour Baseless".
Chief Secretary K. Diraviam it
at 60 children were admitted to
am Government Hospital in
ai district the previous day for

RADHAKRISHNAN

Veerasamy: fighting back

suspected food poisoning after eating the chief minister's free meal at the Christu Raja Middle School. Without reporting on what had happened the paper came out with a denial. Subsequently it was found that seven patients were admitted to the hospital.

Journalistic Mecca: *The Hindu*'s policy of discretion being the better part of valour has given the cue to the rest of the press in Tamil Nadu. When the Madras edition of the *Indian Express* tried its hand at a bit of investigative journalism, it suddenly lost all government advertisements. The daily

"If the journalist associations and the Editors' Guild had made the same hue and cry which they are making now against the Bihar bill, we would have organised a much bigger protest show against the Tamil Nadu bill."

quickly fell into line. Says a Madras journalist: "Since *The Hindu* is the Mecca of most aspiring journalists in the state, is it any wonder that the anti-press legislation in Tamil Nadu failed to generate the kind of sound and fury the Bihar bill did?" The only papers that seem to be above the law are the pro-AIADMK dailies like *Anna* and *Neerottam* and Tamil periodicals like *Mookuthi, Maya* and *Kaman* (*see box*). Tamil Nadu's vigilant police force have ignored the "scurrilous" articles in them about DMK leaders.

Now, at last, several writ petitions have been filed against the bill in the Madras High Court and the Supreme Court. Says *Ethiroli*'s Veerasamy in his petition filed in Madras: "I reliably understand that the Chief Minister Thiru M.G. Ramachandran and his top aides had been considering the ways and means to stop such publications (against MGR) and gag the mouth of the press...." To bolster his claim that the Tamil Nadu press was in general responsible and objective, Veerasamy told INDIA TODAY: "If we accept MGR's explanation for the bill that scurrilous writings are on the increase, then how come practically no case has been registered under Article 292-A since 1960 when this was first introduced?"

Legal Challenge: The Madras chapter of the People's Union of Civil Liberties (PUCL) has also filed a petition in the Madras High Court. PUCL has challenged the legal validity of the bill on the ground that "the correspondents and the newspaper owners have been made to fear the police and the ruling party. The law, far from remedying the question of blackmailing, had really intended to blackmail the citizens who dare to write and express their opinion against the misdeeds of the party in power." Though neither court has given a final verdict, the Supreme Court has temporarily stayed the operation of the amended Article 292-A.

Tamil Nadu's initially lackadaisical reaction to the Press Bill is being blamed on the unsupportive attitude of the national media concentrated in north India. Said a Madras-based special correspondent of a national daily: "If the journalist associations and the Editors' Guild had made the same hue and cry which they are making now against the Bihar bill, we would have organised a much bigger protest show against the Tamil Nadu bill." Adds Saeed Naqvi, editor of the Madras edition of the *Indian Express*: "When the *Indian Express* and I were writing editorials against the draconian laws introduced by the Tamil Nadu Government, no one in Delhi woke up, no crusading journalist made an issue of it and no vigilant member of the Parliament staged a dramatic walk-out. With the solitary exception of the *Indian Express* no other English paper took up the issue when the bill was first introduced."

It is precisely because of the feeble protests of the state's opposition parties, the subservient Tamil Nadu press and the offensive posture adopted by Bihar Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra, that MGR has refused to withdraw the pernicious clauses in the Press Bill. When the Opposition raised the issue again in the Assembly, the chief minister squashed the initiative by saying that the bill had been debated in Feburary and therefore the question of reconsideration did not arise. But the mood in the state is changing as is evident from the statement of an optimistic journalist: "MGR has weathered the mild protest in the state but he will not be able to withstand the hurricane approaching from the north against his anti-press laws."

—PRABHU CHAWLA with bureau reports

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ADITI

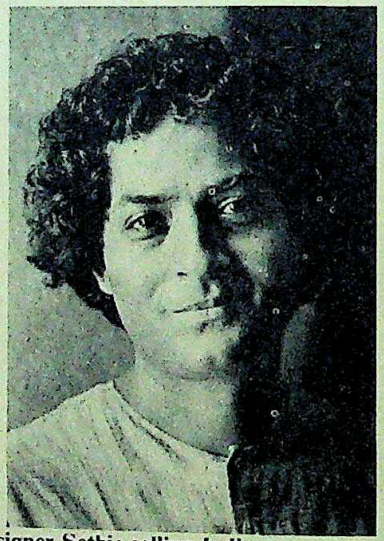
A Resounding Success

ACCORDING to its chief patroness, Pupul Jayakar, "it was one of the greatest shows of the 1980s". According to its chief perpetuator, Rajeev Sethi, "it made major dents in the world of museums". According to arts columnist Shanta Serbjeet Singh it was "a glittering, glowing event which ... will change the face of Indian culture in the western hemisphere". And according to one English critic, "to miss it (would have been) like turning down a free trip to India on a flying carpet". Designer Rajeev Sethi's exhibition *Aditi*, which ran for six weeks through July-August at London's newest but most controversial exhibition space the Barbican Centre, has received nothing but adulatory notices and rapturous responses.

Visited by an estimated 80,000 people, a large number of them children, at a cost of £2 per head, it is now acknowledged as the most successful Indian show ever seen abroad—certainly broad-based enough in its attractions to retrieve the multi-million Festival of India's flagging image. Significantly, its greatest innovation has been to primarily project the art, artisans and performers of rural India. Equally, it has demonstrated how a static exposition in a glass case can be transformed into a living situation, with its whirling *mélange* of 35 craftsmen and performers, among them Mithila painters from Bihar, glass painters from Tanjore and tribal artists from Madhya Pradesh, its acrobats, jugglers, musicians and balladeers.

With its simplicity in conveying complex Indian themes, and the overall enthusiasm it has generated, the exhibition is said to be one of the most effective promotions of India ever mounted. So effective, in fact, that the Smithsonian Institution in America has paid an advance of £20,000 to airlift it—lock, stock and barrel—to be shown in a similar Indian Festival being held in the United States in 1985.

Unforeseen Expense: The only sour note in this gush-and-glow success story has been struck by a discrepancy of some £25,000. Although the exhibition cost the Indian Government Rs 21 lakh in all ("and not a penny in foreign exchange", notes Jayakar with satisfaction), the bulk of the payment was contributed by the British, including the Barbican Centre, a private investor called Dass Investments and the Festival Committee in England. The Barbican which gave 20,000 sq ft of space to Sethi to conjure his magic show, however, failed to get clearance from the Greater London Council on its fire regulations. A completely new structure had to be constructed at the last minute sending the Indian organisers into a complete tizzy, delaying a segment of the show from opening on time, and escalating costs phenomenally.



Pupul Jayakar (left) and designer Sethi: selling India:

The Barbican, headed by a man called —and it is hard to resist the delicious irony of the name—Henry Wrong, claims that the Indians assumed that a fibreglass construction would be adequate and that the exhibition's sponsor, Dass Investments, would foot the new bill. Sethi argues that he was given the go ahead by the Barbican back in March and has letters to prove it. "The unpaid bills concern them, not us," says Sethi after his triumphant return home. And Jayakar vaguely adds that "it was a horrendous mistake on the part of the Barbican ... but it's all been sorted out".

Aditi, with its supporting show by avant-garde English designer Zandra Rhodes, who displayed a whole selection of clothes, jewellery, furniture, table and bed-linen inspired by her trip to India, is an original of the Festival of India though it was a much smaller when it first opened under the sam —which in Sanskrit means "abund and "creative power"—at the P Maidan in New Delhi in 1978, its B version has broadened in scope an sign. *Aditi* is still dedicated to the through the passage of a child's life birth to the years of adolescence, it the life cycle in the Indian tradition. phors of puberty, marriage, child motherhood, learning and living are veyed—as well as a host of intra-per relationships— through a huge am of artefacts, household objects, te toys and wall murals. vened by actual artist performers in action the simulated en ments.

Sethi's argumen approaching such a v of art and history is ple: "I reject the conc styles and chronolog says, "because art come to us in style chronology...the cla and vernacular have significance and can scovered simultaneo Simple terracotta toys refore, rub shoulders fine filigree perfume c ners of silver, baked horses from Tamil can be observed in same context as ornately embellished jewel boxes from Surat.

The 240-page exquisitely printed logue which was produced in Indi proaches the themes exactly thus: A century granite torso of Radha, exqu fashioned, is seen opposite simple ments like a silver wire tribal neck second century terracotta of a h woman is juxtaposed to a 19th c Kangra miniature—all signalling ima fertility. The rather esoteric text more pretentious by quotes such as has continuously tested the waft skill against the warp of his insight" is ascribed to Pupul Jayakar—ac much more through images.

Indeed Sethi's exhibition achie finest quality through the objects collected, placed against live demo tion. In all, he travelled for some

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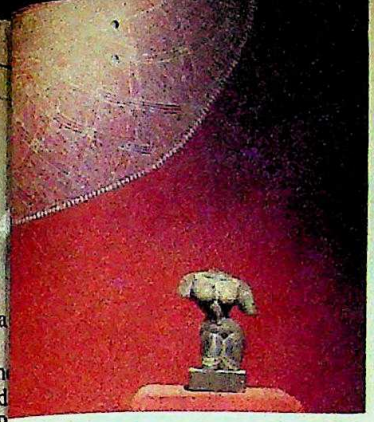
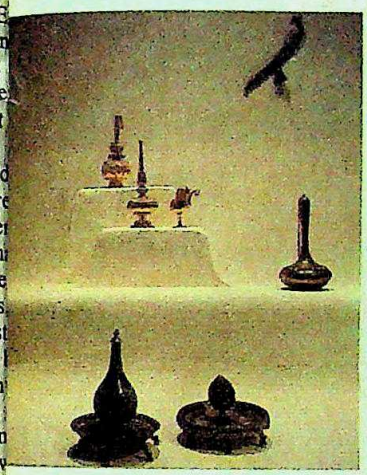
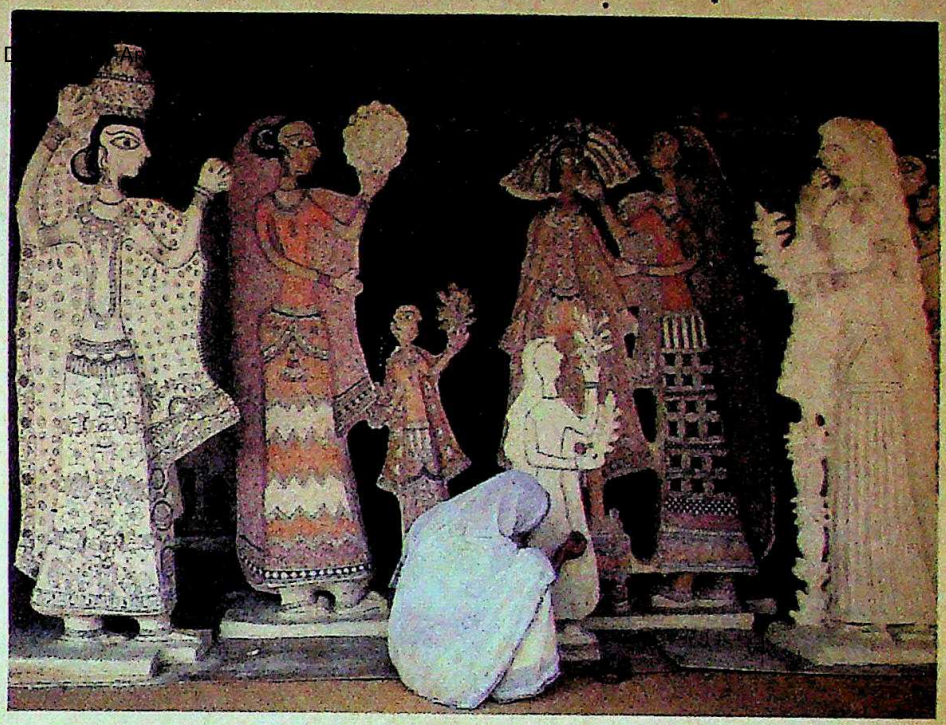
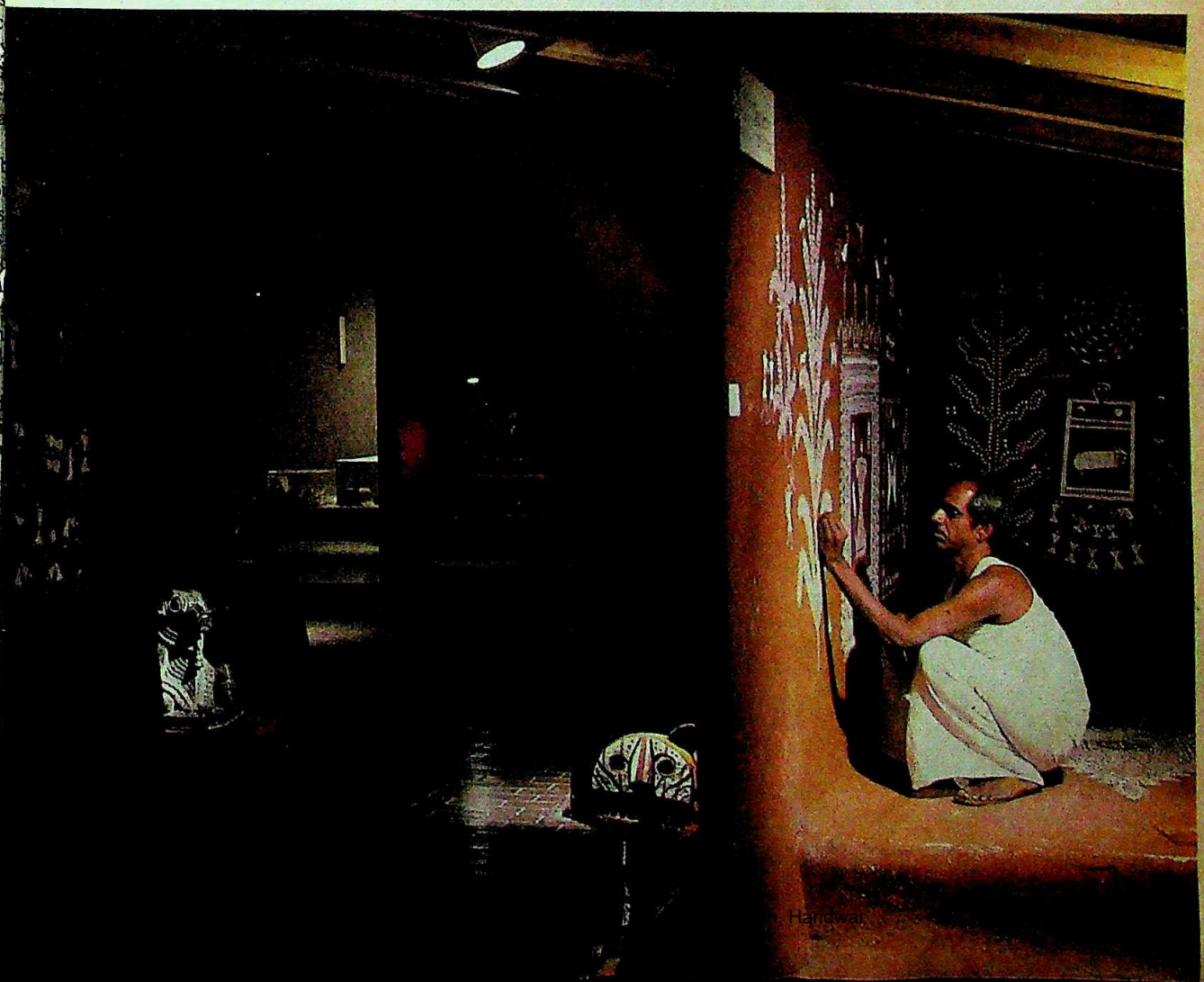






Clockwise from top left: a 14th century sculpture against a rice-paste fertility drawing; a woman artist finishing Mithila "sculptures" in papier mâché; a Warli painter at work in a section of the show, and a detail from the Queen of England's private collection of rare Indian objects loaned to *Aditi*.



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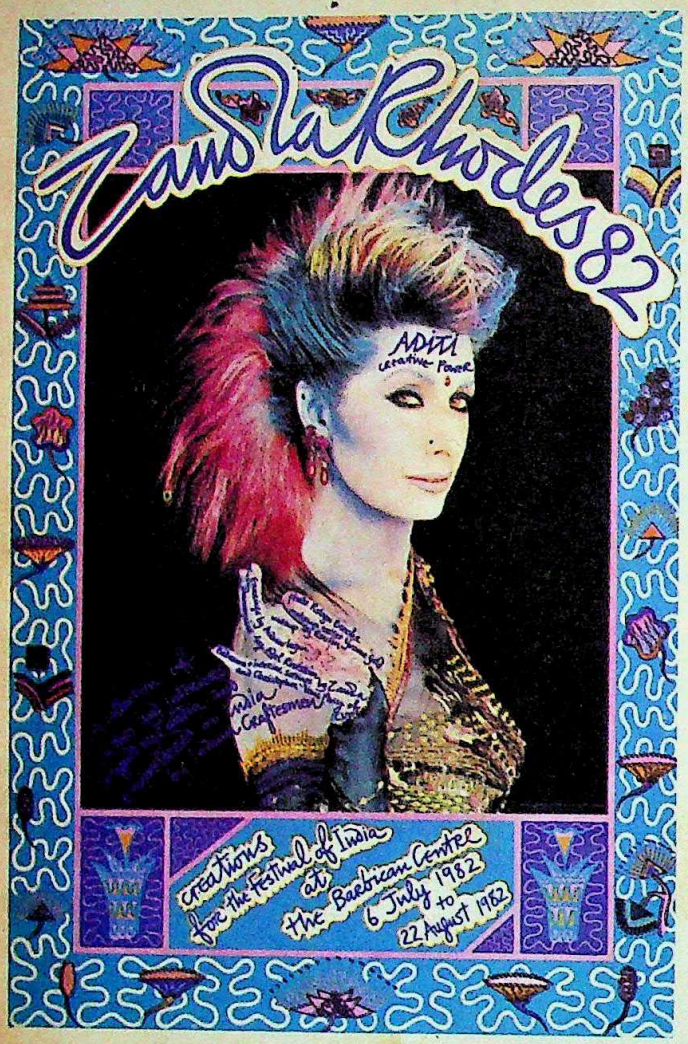

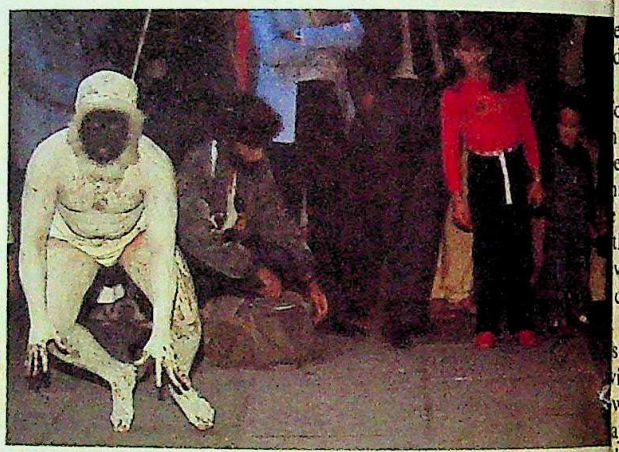

Clockwise from top left: Zandra Rhodes in her *Aditi* poster; the of Indian craftsmen and performers against London Bridge; an *behrupia* dressed as a monkey, and a young *Bhopa* balladeer Rajasthan entertain English audiences at the show

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in the subcontinent to come up
500 objects, about half of which he
ed from museums and private col-
. The rest were specially commiss-
esulting in some interesting revivals
novations. Madhubani figures, for
e, appear in *Aditi* transposed
larger-than-life papier maché
es; the potters of Molela in Rajas-
re persuaded to create a massive
depicting a contemporary village
ooden dolls from Raichur are revi-
show the age-old ceremony of ku-
ool performed for girls attaining

itish Collections: Nor has he left
collections untouched. Acquired
first time are 22 Indian objects in
een of England's private collection
ding fabulous gold and jewel en-
perfume containers, *surahis* and
or display in the section of the ex-
known as the Nawab's Nuptial
er. Sethi thus effectively reinforces
nique in combining the aristocratic
rustic with equal ease.

though the Jayakar-Sethi duo firm-
ve that the object of the exhibition
create an interest and awareness in
especially in British children who
so be of Indian origin, they hope
ill be a commercial fall-out from
w. Jayakar thinks the show will act
ajor catalyst for promoting exports
hi quotes a figure of Rs 3 crore as
pected generation of business. In
hen *Aditi* is launched in America,
pe the commercial tie-ups will be
igger and more intensively followed
ndia, which so far means only the
oms and Handicrafts Exports Cor-
n.

ll, both are terribly pleased at the
success of the show. For Jayakar
s that "we have been able to show
ld that we possess real creativity in
and our image is not just imitative"
at "there is much more to our
than poverty". She says she was
to tears when she saw the abandon
performers who greeted her with a

e English media thought that the
was "an enormous success" despite
stacles created by the Barbican and
disregard for Indian performers
eir needs: artists from rural India,
liens in London, were expected to
by tube after eight hours of
ing and given rest cubicles smaller
those for security guards. What
hopes *Aditi* to eventually achieve
to be set up as a permanent exhibit
an travel round the country from
it originates—India.

CLAY CRAFTS

On The Wane

GONE are the days when the crowded bazaars of Lucknow overflowed with colourful miniature mud toys, and the children of nawabs and commoners alike played with meticulously moulded soldiers, dancing girls, musicians, birds, animals and fruits made of coloured clay. Today, these traditional handicrafts have virtually disappeared from the markets and the same fate seems to await the craftsmen.

One reason is the *kali matti* (black soil) of which these artifacts are made is steadily becoming scarce. Sohanlal Prajapati, a master craftsman from old Lucknow, laments: "There is a sense of loss and bereavement among the traditional craftsmen who know that this once famous art is now dying." He puts the blame on the "callous" Avas Vikas authorities, who have had residential housing complexes built in the Talkatora locality, where lies a precious plot of black soil—the only one of its kind in the country. Sohanlal complains that despite solemn promises not to "encroach" on this area, the authorities have done so, sparing only a small piece of land not bigger than 10 *bighas* (30,250 sq yards) for the 800 artisans to work from. The 700-member Uttar Pradesh Prajapati Navyug Sabha, of which Sohanlal is the president, cannot afford to pay the land rent on the Talkatora plot.

Groups of artisans have been meeting the "concerned" officials repeatedly over the last two years, but have been unable to elicit a favourable response from them. Consequently, the supply of *kali matti*, which is imperative for the survival of this unique craft, is in short supply. Whereas a donkey-load of this soil cost 50 paise ten years ago, it now costs as much as Rs 3.

The gifted craftsmen who create these exquisite forms face more problems than the shortage of *kali matti*. Chhotey Lal, who heads one of the two well-known families of clay bird-makers, says: "Even when we all get together, the four members of my family cannot make more than 200 clay birds a day, which will sell for a mere 10 to 12 paise each. This leaves us with a profit of not more than Rs 8 per day, no matter how hard we work." The process of moulding these birds in varying sizes is time-consuming. And the careful colouring of their feet and feathers takes even longer. Then they have to dry properly before they can "fly to the market". Both of Chhotey Lal's college-going sons—Gopinath, 18, and Triloknath, 16, are keen to learn this art in their spare time. But he is doubtful that many youngsters will take it up as a professional craft, because even a coolie earns more per day with less effort.

Apparently, foreigners are more appreciative of this craft than Indians. Talking of the low local sales, Chhotey Lal said that the best days for the craft were when the "*gora sahibs*" (the British) were here, for they understood the value of handicrafts and honoured craftsmen. Even now, if it wasn't for export consignments to Europe, Japan and America—worth over Rs 12,000 per month—the artisans would find it difficult to survive on local sales.

A mother-daughter team make clay toys: painstaking labour

In the last ten years, the number of craftsmen has gone down from 1,200 to 800. Most of the craftsmen are from the backward Kumhar class, and in no position to supply the finances needed to keep the precious plot of black soil. Meanwhile, the authorities argue that population pressures in the city necessitate the use of land available for housing.

Lucknow, the city renowned for its culture and craft, is witnessing the gradual death of one of its unique arts. As the plastic revolution reaches into the *gullies* (by-lanes) of Avadh, the value of handmade clay toys is being gradually forgotten.

—ANAND SAGAR

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COMICS

Fortune From Fantasy

IT HAS emerged, in the last three years, as possibly the fastest-growing part of the Indian publishing world. Creeping up on newspapers and the more respectable periodical magazines, comics have suddenly become the money-spinners of the trade. Pushing upwards from total sales of roughly Rs 1 crore in 1978, comics will touch nation-wide news-stand sales of nearly Rs 5.5 crore this year. What is more the market is booming at faster than 25 per cent each year.

A vast profusion of comics publishers has come up in this period. Starting with only Bombay-based giants Indrajal comics and Amar Chitra Katha, the Indian comics world today includes more than eight well established Hindi publishing houses in Delhi, at least two publishers each in Madras, Calcutta and Meerut, and smaller printing houses in Sivakasi, Hyderabad and Kottayam. In addition there were also a number of fly-by-night publishers bent on cashing in on the comics boom, and a string of feature writing agencies retailing well-known comic strip characters to the various publishers.

The choice of characters is staggering. At a railway bookstall today a comic *aficionado* can pick from a range which runs from adventure pot-boilers like Phantom, Bahadur, Superman, Batman and Inspector Vikram to love stories, cowboy comics, Second World War stories, mythological tales from the Ramayana and Mahabharata, and biographies of religious saints or freedom fighters, all published in India. Humour lovers can choose Chacha Chakram, Madhu Muskaan, a range of Chacha Bhatija or Mama Bhanja comics, or the more well-known western strip heroes, Beetle Bailey, Popeye and Asterix. And having already monopolised practically every other media form in the country, Hindi films too have invaded the comics scene, with a best-selling new series by the publishers of Delhi-based *The Hindustan Times*: Film Chitrakatha.

Transcending Language: Even language barriers have been transcended in the rush for higher comics sales. Asterix, which has already gone through a transformation from the original French to English, can now be read in a Hindi translation by Delhi-based Govarsons; Bahadur the dacoit-hunter is retailed in six languages, including Tamil and Malayalam; Hindu mythologicals by various publishers are available in at least nine languages and Superman and Batman in five; and Archie, the best-selling teenage humour comics, is eagerly read by his fans in six regional languages in the country.

The sales of the individual publishers have risen spectacularly. The Times of India group's Indrajal comic, which has been in existence for 20 years, sold less than 2 lakh copies per month four years ago; by last year, their fortnightly releases of Phantom, Bahadur and Garth added up to monthly sales of 5.8 lakh copies. Cashing in on the booming markets, the group last November increased its frequency from fortnightly to weekly, and today Indrajal tots up monthly sales of roughly 10 lakh copies. Said A.T. Singhvi, Indrajal's manager: "The market is growing very rapidly. In the last two years there has been a mushrooming of comics publishers, particularly in Delhi, but we find that most readers will buy up whatever is available as long as it is in comic form."

Amar Chitra Katha's publishers India Book House (IBH), primarily a distribution agency, found the comics line so lucrative that they have already branched out into a full-fledged children's magazine in comics, Tinkle, which IBH executives claim already sells close to 1 lakh copies a month. Now IBH is drawing up plans to convert Tinkle into a fortnightly magazine, and expansion plans for their Amar Chitra Katha mythological and historical series also appeared to be underway.

In Madras, the *Chandamama* children's magazine had launched two comic s Chandamama classics and comics and s ton comics, and churned out 1.2 lakh c monthly of Walt Disney characters Donald Duck and Zorro, and D Govarsons published one weekly and a 10 monthly humour comics in Hindi Govardhan Kapoor, publisher of Mu Muskaan, Asterix and Archie: "The c field is passing through a boom phas never before, and sales are increasing least 33 per cent each year. We alrea Rs 40 lakh worth of comics annually next year we hope to increase this to o 64 lakh."

But the booming comics sales of are only a recent phenomenon. Alth market leader Indrajal has been aroun 20 years, and Amar Chitra Katha fo comics entered the big league only in th four years. In March 1963, Indraja launched with the publication of a 1 Phantom story by best-selling comics a Lee Falk, "The Phantom's Belt". But not till late 1976 that the company succ in creating an all-Indian success, Bah which broadened its publishing base.

Amar Chitra Katha, with its long l of historical and folklore characters similarly unable to rack up really large sales till only a few years ago. T however, comics publishers in the c not only sell faster than ever before bu even developed a stable of fantasy cha to feed their reading public—Bahadu ret Agent Vikram, Inspector Garuda, rade Shaikhchilly, Nanha Jasoos, Ba Mia Majnu, and Inspector Azad are few of all the Indian comic book heroe have been plastered on comic panels last few years.

To start with, the comics publi were almost totally dependent on fo feature agencies to supply them with sa

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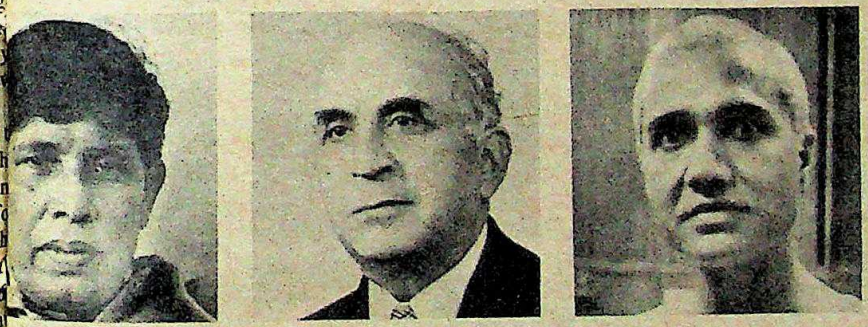
King Features, with its line-up of ted comic strips like Phantom, ike, Flash Gordon, Archie and Bailey; Asia Features with Garth and Drake, and Famous Features which d the rights to James Bond strips, Blaise and Mutt and Jeff, all to the Indian market of newspaper s well as comic books. The man who d this was Anand Pai, 50, who pio- comics in the country when he laun- Indrajal for the Times group. Pai very early that he intended to be in a mere channel for foreign comic- er creators.

Indian Characters: Four years after he got out the first Phantom magazine, Pai giants in the mystery, suspense and humour fields, the largely vernacular syndicate agency today has more than 50 regional newspaper subscribers nation-wide for its strips, and last fortnight signed a contract with a Delhi publisher for publication of the "Secret Agent Vikram" series in book form. Since he set up Rang Rekha, Pai has helped develop at least six adventure comic strips, including three—Tiger Madan, Faster Fenay, and Book-lover Bipin—which failed miserably. He has also brought out four humour strips, and a number of educational strips like 'Fact Fantasy', a column not unlike Ripley's Believe It Or Not.

In addition, his agency churned out medical education comic strips, pictorial



(From left to right) Pai, Kapoor and Uppal: launching colourful characters

IBH and launched the Amar Chitra series with a string of mythological and tales from the *Panchatantra* and "I once asked my nephews and to produce a children's magazine the holidays," reminisces Pai, "and I alled at the extent of their ignorance. stories they wrote were straight out of yton, and they obviously knew noth- ndian characters or the culture, so I etermined to create an educative hat would also be readable." In the w years, Pai not only developed the al series till it became a serious itor to the entertainment-oriented l series but also successfully started a agency of his own.

though Rang Rekha features could t any of the established international science and technology comics, and a number of educational features aimed specifically at schoolchildren. Perhaps his greatest success has been Tinkle, which combines education and entertainment in an eminently saleable package: the magazine has already overtaken individual issues of Amar Chitra Katha in sales, and is today poised for a growth which puts it in the Indrajal league.

Close Monitoring: But the creative aspect of the comics business in India, unlike in the West where independent writers like Lee Falk started their own strips, has almost invariably been ruled by the executives who manage the comic publications. No artist or writer has established a character which has lasted in the marketplace: the successful characters, in fact, were actually conceived by men like Pai and only executed by writers and artists working to strict specifications. Amar Chitra Katha, Tinkle and the numerous Rang Rekha comics were all Pai's brainchildren, and he continues to closely monitor and edit every strip produced by the writers and artists he employs.

Even Bahadur, India's highest-selling comic strip character after the Phantom, was the brainchild not of a writer but of Indrajal's staid manager, A.T. Singhvi. Conceived as a dacoit who swears revenge for his father's death, Bahadur is eventually reformed by the very police inspector who had shot his father. Turning into a home-grown 'nemesis of evil' Bahadur starts hunting dacoits and crooks with the inspector. But it was only after he had ironed out the thematic details that Singhvi handed over the story-line to Bombay abstract artist Abid Surti, who wrote the Bahadur scripts for some years.

Today Bahadur is written, surprisingly enough, by astrologer, fortune-teller, soothsayer and part-time comics writer Jagjit Uppal, a character as colourful as the stories he weaves. Possibly the best adventure-suspense comics writer in the business, Uppal has also inherited Rang Rekha's "Vikram" from Surti. "Jagjit Uppal has great sense of drama," enthused Pai, "he is one of the few comics writers who has understood that putting together a comic is more than just writing a story; you have to know how to build up drama and suspense and how to handle it."

Lopsided: But comics creation in India has been largely lopsided. Almost half of the total sales of comics in the country come from mythological tales and folklore, and the characters do not always have national appeal. Despite the problems in creating characters of national appeal, it is clear that the comics boom is on the upswing.

Indrajal has already decided on an expansion scheme which will increase its line-up of adventure characters even while the company adds a new series of humour comics to its repertoire; King Features had sold a number of characters, including Secret Agent Corrigan, Johnny Hazard and Popeye to SRC features in Madras to be retailed in comic book form; Famous Features had reportedly concluded a deal handing over publishing rights of its James Bond series to another Indian publisher; British comics giant D.C. Thomson was making a sales pitch to interest Indian publishers in their Commando, Stargazers and Love Story lines; and Amar Chitra Katha had finalised an expansion programme which they were keeping closely under wraps. Cleaning up in a booming marketplace, comics publishers were storming through the country in much the same way as their characters on comic panels.

—CHANDER UDAY SINGH

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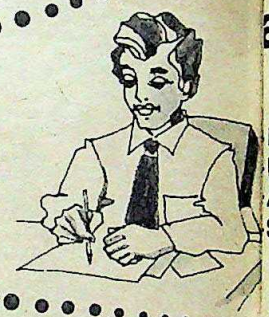

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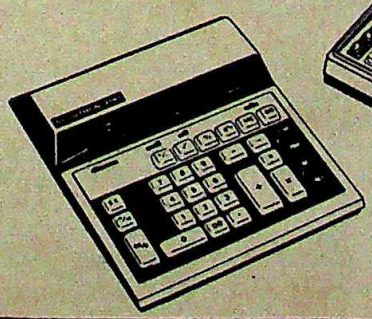

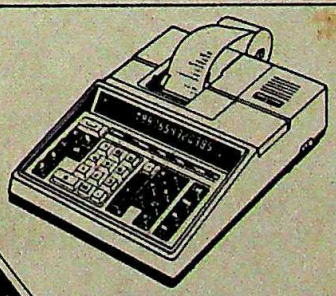

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TRIBALS

Women In Distress

A SMALL notice on the magazine's fly-leaf states: "*Manushi* is a non-profit venture, financed through subscriptions and donations from individuals. As a policy we do not accept any grants from institutions." Nor does *Manushi*, India's first serious journal devoted to women's issues, accept any advertisements that depict women as sex stereotypes. But since it first appeared in January 1979, it has erratically struggled to survive and managed to create a substantial following of nation-wide subscribers who not only subscribe but distribute and publicise it as well. For the "all-women group" that bring out the two-language monthly (in Hindi and English) with a combined print run of about 12,000 copies, the against-all-odds, wholly voluntary effort has not been without rewards. Not only has response in far corners of the country been enthusiastic, but specific issues like the anti-dowry campaign, oppression of women in particular areas and in matters relating to health, working conditions and their image for instance in Hindi films, which *Manushi* dissects regularly in film reviews, have been taken up with renewed force.

But last month, *Manushi* scored a major triumph when the Supreme Court admitted a long letter from its editor, Madhu Kishwar, 31, as a petition demanding action against the conditions of tribal women of Singhbhum district in southern Bihar. Kishwar, a small-built woman of inexhaustible energy who teaches English in a Delhi college, first visited the region as a member of an enquiry committee into alleged atrocities against tribal women by the Bihar Military Police in which 14 tribals were killed. That was back in December 1980. Following up the initial visit with two more, in June 1981 and May this year, Kishwar sought to answer questions that had puzzled her from the outset: Why was the silence so impenetrable when the committee looked for evidence of rape victims? Why was it that while tribal women were seen at work in the fields everywhere, their social status seemed the most precarious? Travelling through 20 villages, Kishwar found women abandoned, reduced to beggary and starvation or living in plain destitution.

Harsh Inequalities: Reconstructing the jigsaw through private interviews, at the Chaibasa law courts, and through historical research, Kishwar managed to put together a bizarre scenario of the status of women belonging to the Ho tribe. Among her chief discoveries were:

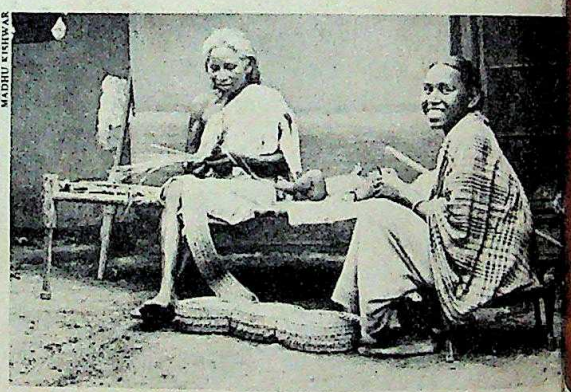
► Ho women, if identified as rape victims by an outsider, automatically lose their economic, social and ritual rights.

► If married, their husbands have the right to divorce them without providing for them. If unmarried, they lose their usufructory right over parental property, and can be forced to leave the village.

► Although 80 per cent of the agricultural functions were performed by Ho women, according to a so-called social custom, they are legally denied ownership or inheritance of land. An unmarried daughter living in a parental home has no right to her family's land, which can be inherited only by male descendants.

► If a woman is widowed, she can only subsist on maintenance from the next male relative who acquires the land. Such women have no right to mortgage or sell the land.

HARI OM GULATI


MADHU KISHWAR

Kishwar (left) and co-petitioners Maki Bui with daughter: in search of justice

Although she was denied access to the Chaibasa law courts, Kishwar managed to hang around there long enough to document the case histories of women petitioners. She further pored through lawyers' files to come up with astounding circumstantial evidence. "Single women—unmarried or widowed—had in many cases been murdered by their male relatives to acquire property. Even more frightening, many such women had been branded as witches, which either called for their being hacked to pieces by a *taangi* or woodcutter's axe, either surreptitiously or in public," says Kishwar who investigated the brutalities.

Returning to Delhi with a mass of material, Kishwar, on the advice of lawyer friends, decided to write a nine-page letter to Justice P.N. Bhagwati that was admitted as a writ petition in public interest. Specifically, she documented three cases of gross exploitation. One was of a Ho woman called Maki Bui, about 50 years old and lately widowed, who feared for her life since she had produced no male heir and her only da could not inherit her husband's pr Attempts to usurp her inheritance h ready been made by her husband's b and their sons who had tried to brea her house in an attempt to murder her Bui's plight, according to Kishwar, acute that she is keen to mortgage or s land and migrate to another village—thing that, as a Ho woman, she is agi permitted to do. Things have got so ba Kishwar, that already a slow hyst building up in Maki Bui's Lonjo people accusing her of being a witch

Interim Relief: In his order, wh lowed a petition filed jointly by K Maki Bui and Bui's daughter, Bhagwati provided interim relie mediately by ordering no interfere Bui's right to plough or cultivate he Simultaneously it asked the respond this case the Bihar Government and Bui's husband's relatives, to appear in

For Kishwar it not only cam surprise that her letter provoked a from the judge in a week's time, but issue of tribals can be taken up in a perspective. Since tribal rights as a group cannot necessarily be safe under the Indian Constitution, Kish covered in Singhbhum that the law o them was the Chota Nagpur Tenanc 1908—a bigoted and obsolete coloni ment that enshrines discrimination cannot inherit or own property u guise of "social custom".

Says Kishwar: "What's worse these women have no recourse. Afte been up and down to the Chaibasa couple of times—each time having their meagre possessions to buy they can only appeal to a commissi charge of tribal affairs in Ranchi. H ultimate arbitrator in their eyes. All I to do was to show them that there is authority—and their injustice can lenged and get a fair hearing."

—SUN

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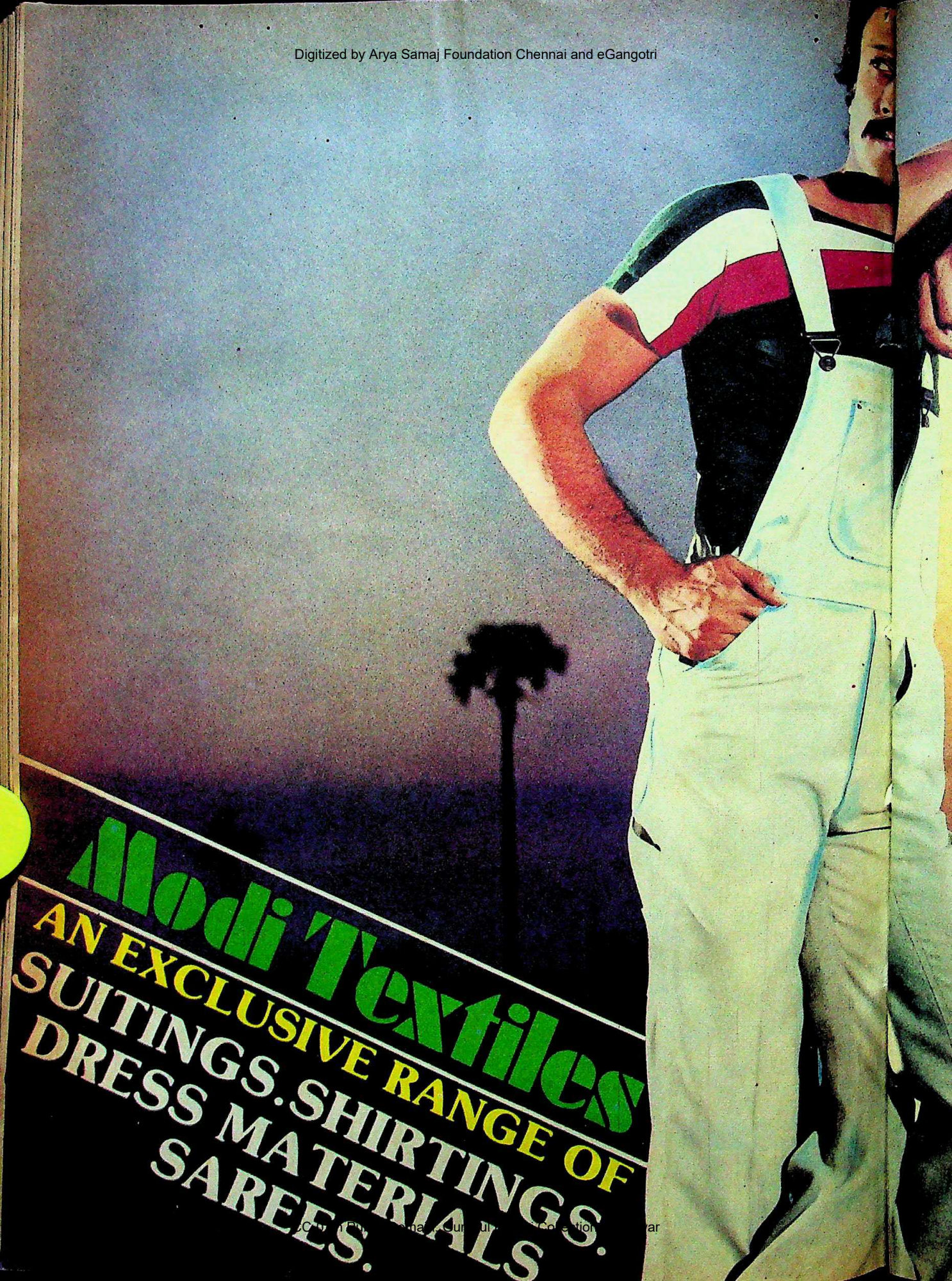

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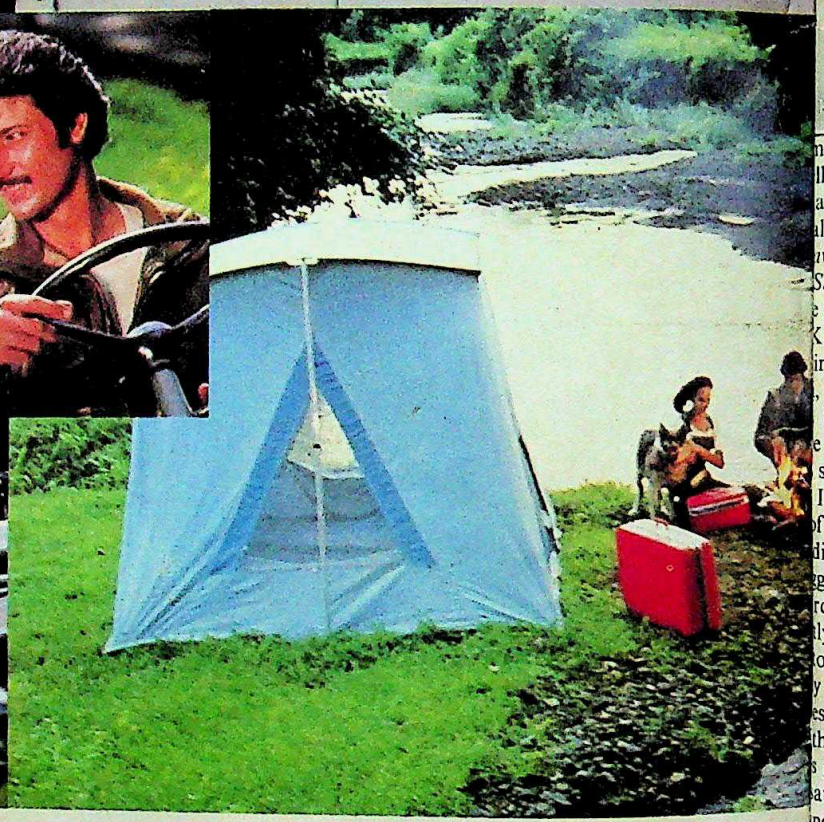

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ientific Soothsayer

AN UNCOMMITTED SOCIETY
Kapur
981)
s 75; Pages: 229

JAGDISH Chandra Kapur is an unusual man. He is an activist social philosopher, in addition to being an engineer, a technocrat and owner of three companies dealing with high technology. He is also the proud nous owner of "Kapur Farms" lhi's Palam Airport where he runs an R&D showpiece to demonstrate l philosophy. Jagdish Kapur is an *vatar* of Alvin Toffler, author of *Shock* and *Third Wave*. The two e friends.

Kapur's social philosophy has not intellectual and emotional tremors , as Toffler's has in the US and Europe, it is partly because In- e not known for their appetite for social philosophies, and contem- Indian intellection is generally f controversial ideas. The tenden- dia is to tag a label to an intellec- gage and consign it to the left- room of cerebral confections.

ly, however, Kapur himself is a o the propagation of his robust, y challenging social philosophy. es in English, a language that he th more aplomb than elegance, s unaware of, or indifferent to, the ation of the English-reading Indi- ncomfortable sleep-denying ideas. ddresses himself to the elitist har- of India's modernization, a tribe pped thinking since the Third Five an Document came out with empty s in the 1960s and then went unto along with the mortal remains of amed Jawaharlal Nehru.

sumer Compulsions: Kapur's con- with the future of this planet and nkind (he is sensitive to women's starting premise is that capitalist r societies of the West cannot be a for human development because s which are irrevocably committed merist orientation of their produc- cesses, and where the compulsions easing production get precedence urgency for creating employment, nd to reach a point of no return..."

In the first two chapters of his book, Kapur shows how the capitalist consumer societies with their unending big appetites have, in fact, reached the point of no return and become "nightmare" societies. Here he traverses ground that has been ploughed up as forcefully and more convincingly by Alvin Toffler and other futurists and environmentalists. Kapur also rejects the Soviet model for its freezing of human initiative, and its over-centralised bureaucratic command and control.

The future of humankind, in Kapur's vision, lies with the "uncommitted" societies of the developing world. His definition of an uncommitted society is simple and pervasive: it is a society that has not irrevocably dedicated itself to unbridled consumerism, a society that is not seduced by the false glamour of the western capitalist model nor hypnotised by the austere discipline of the Soviet model. Among the uncommitted societies, Kapur fastens on India. He is probably the most hopeful prophet of India's future, not a soothsayer but one who bases his predictions on scientific parameters of modernization.

India leads the world in the "third wave" of energy—from coal to oil to the rays of the sun. India could avoid the blind alley of unbridled consumerism and build a new model of integrated rural development with the help of solar and biomass energy in which it has an endless abundance. It is this scientific, relatively low-cost and utterly challenging model of integrated modernization and development of rural India that is the central theme of Kapur's social philosophy. He spelt it out first in a slim volume *India 2000 A.D.* (India International Centre, 1975) with a skeletal framework of inputs and architecture. He builds the theoretical (or philosophical) scaffolding of his social engineering in *India: An Uncommitted Society*. In a forthcoming publication Kapur intends to draw up a macroproject to demonstrate, for instance, how Rajasthan can be transformed into a granary of India.

Kapur's social philosophy and human engineering model is getting increasingly popular in leading developing countries in Africa and Latin America. His ideas as well as his farms draw visitors from the West and Japan. But it is to the Indian planners and thinkers that his message and his model are primarily addressed. It will be tragic if this prophet of hope is not heard with the respect and attention he so palpably deserves.

—BHABANI SEN GUPTA

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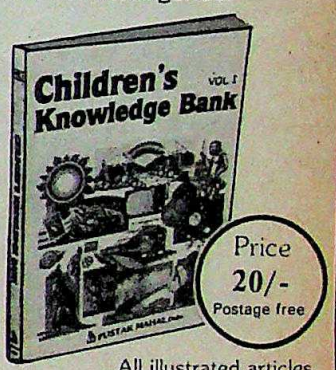

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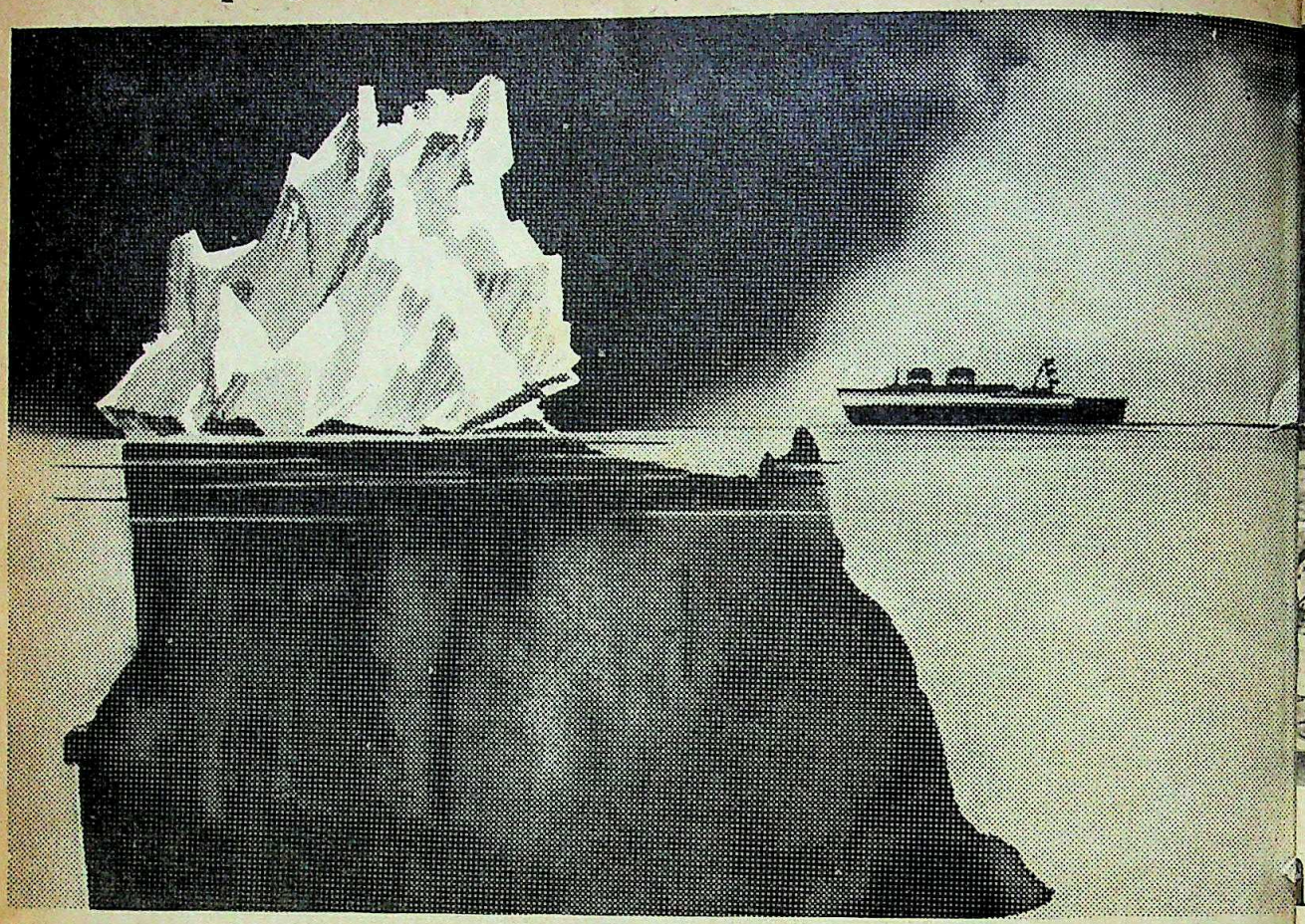

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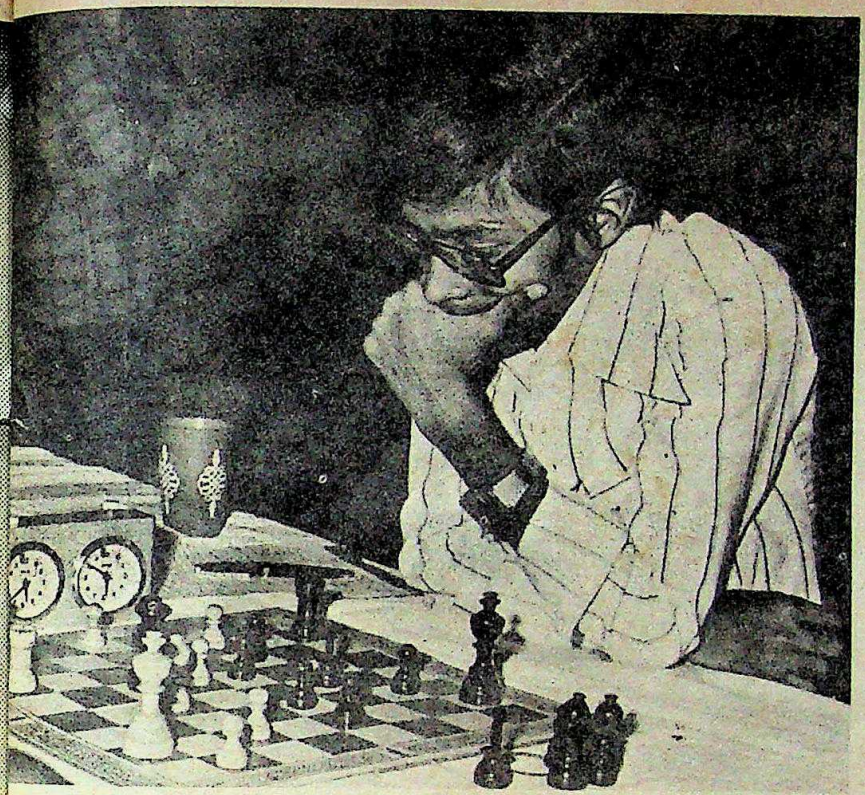

Baruah: on his way up

...e Young Master

...AS, literally, a David and Goliath ...ontation. In one corner India's ...ndu Baruah, 15, a comparative ...r to international chess. In the ...ktor Korchnoi, 60, world number ... self-exiled Russian grandmaster. ...tnight, chess circles in the world ...onished when Baruah defeated ...i in 54 moves at the Lloyd's Bank ...onal in London. Korchnoi was so ...t his defeat that he did not con... Baruah after the game. Baruah, ...art, is now only one international ...ay from the international master ... is inching his way towards earn...oveted grandmaster title, a feat no ...as been able to accomplish so far. ...uah has been a consistently good ...ayer ever since he was introduced ...ame at the age of five. He first ...ention to his mental skill when, ...tching his father play chess with ... brother's tutor, he pointed out ...ves his father had made which he ...ld lose him the match. From then ... Baruah lived chess, encouraged ...ther and passed a series of impor...estones: the West Bengal state ...ess crown at 11, tenth position in ...h national B chess tournament, third position in the world under-14 championships and fifth in the world under-17 championships two years later.

Mature Skill: Playing with fast maturing skill, Baruah secured the junior player award and this feat brought him his first international master norm—the youngest Indian to do so. Baruah prefers the traditional approach to openings with his own set of favoured lines like the Guico-Piano and the Petroff Defence. He depends on long-drawn out games which tend to be tough middle-game fights and difficult end-game possibilities. Baruah is rated to become a grandmaster because his play is characterised by good positional insight and a capacity to hold out against big odds.

His victory over Korchnoi has not affected Baruah's mild manner, which borders on shyness. In the Lloyd's Bank championships, he played nine matches in all, won four, lost two and drew three. About the Korchnoi match, he said: "I thought that I would play for a draw. But he started playing attacking moves and I realised that I too would have to attack if I wanted to survive. After that it was very clear that the match would be decisive. I counter-attacked and after that both of us were under time pressure. But one thing I must add: Korchnoi did not play well in this tournament. In every match he had to fight very hard."

Though visibly thrilled, he ascribed Korchnoi's defeat to "mistakes committed by him", rather than better performance on his own part. There was a slight tinge of regret in his voice as he recalled that Korchnoi had not congratulated him after the game. However, he was quick to add: "For one hour after the game he discussed with me the various moves made during the play." Baruah must also have been disappointed when, on his return to Calcutta, only his family was at the airport to receive him—motorcades and suchlike are apparently reserved for only cricketers or the occasional badminton champion.

Great Aspirations: The young master is not letting that get him down, though. At the moment, he is preparing for the higher secondary examination, but is dreaming of the day when he becomes world champion. He admits, however, that this is not going to be easy. Says Baruah: "I must have the benefit of being trained by internationally renowned coaches as only then will I be able to rectify my mistakes." For that he will need funds. The Baruahs live in a two-room apartment in a rickety building in a congested north Calcutta locality with clear evidence everywhere of a struggling existence. The father, Benoy Baruah, owns a small printing press and his business is modest.

Thus money problems have always plagued the young schoolboy: his father had to buy his own ticket for the trip to London as the promised help from the West Bengal Council of Sports did not materialise. Baruah, however, received passage fare from Delhi to London and was allowed $250 (Rs 2,250 in foreign exchange. In the family's modest circumstances, it had never even been possible to arrange any proper training for Baruah. Says he: "I learnt my chess mainly from books and magazines on the game."

Baruah's victory over Korchnoi must have given fresh impetus to India's chess players. In the early '60s, Manuel Aaron had brought about a revival of the game in this country by becoming the first international master when he won the Asian zonal championships. Years later in 1978, V. Ravi Kumar won the Asian junior championships to become the second international master. R. Ravishekar joined the chosen few later. The bespectacled schoolboy from Calcutta, fresh from his giant-killing feat is set to become the first in a line of Indian grand-masters.

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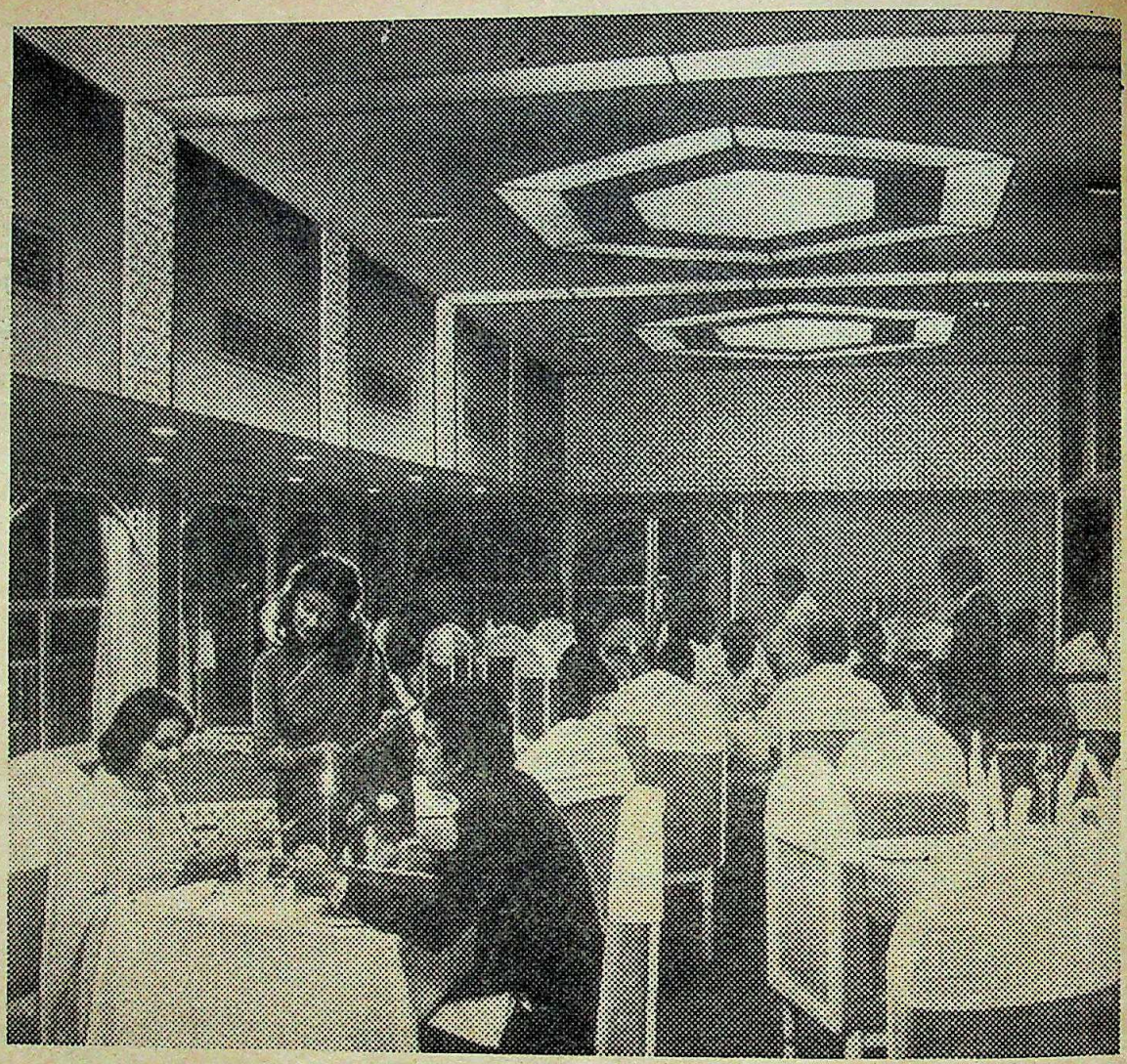

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st Not Cricket

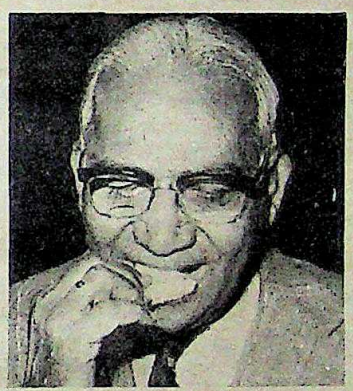
ALL the sports organisations in his country, the Board of Control or Cricket in India (BCCI) is possibly est. Last fortnight, however, the ad created a problem: the simple of a cheque for Rs 35 lakh—the of the Delhi Test between India MCC last year—which should have the BCCI account in Madras, but went into a fresh fixed deposit ac- Bombay. Over half-a-dozen of the members asked for details of the curious progress. Jagmohan Dal- onorary secretary of the Bengal Association, wrote to M.A. Chidam- BCCI treasurer, asking if any board or working committee member had d the opening of the for such a huge —according to BCCI new bank account can ed without the board's

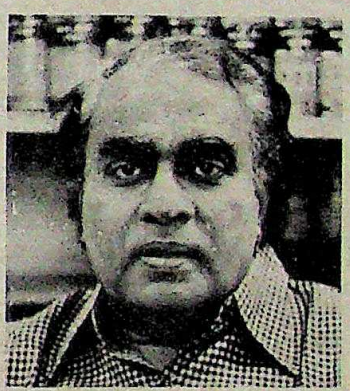
Delhi Test was handl- special committee ap- by the BCCI, because the d District Cricket As- (DDCA) had been ed. BCCI President S.K. le headed the commit- Bindra, president of the ricket Association was and P.M. Rungta of n was treasurer. As s no permanent body in Delhi to r the record profit of Rs 35 lakh, esolved that the money would be ed to the BCCI's account in Madras. g to Bindra, he along with Rungta heque for Rs 35 lakh on February n favour of the BCCI.

instead of handing the cheque to baram, Rungta inexplicably with- money from the Tolstoy Marg of the New Bank of India and d it into a demand draft—No 8/82 dated February 6, 1982— n the bank's Bombay branch— as not in on this. In a letter to the ngta wrote: "Please issue a demand the name of Board of Control for n India payable at Bombay." On day, as it happened, an account ed in the Banque Nationale de Paris ed deposit of Rs 35 lakh for one made in the name of the BCCI. baram received a fixed deposit rece- Rungta, instead of a cheque.

uted Matters: The matter was first the working committee meeting on April 1, 1982. Some pointed questions remained unanswered: why Rungta converted the cheque into a draft on his own; why a foreign bank was preferred, especially when the rate of interest—7.5 per cent—is the same as that of Indian banks; who endorsed the account papers as only the BCCI president and/or treasurer can operate an account and that too after a BCCI resolution; and how the bank opened an account in the name of an organisation without asking for the resolution and the memorandum of association.

The group that has talked the most about Rungta's initiative is the 'anti-Bombay group', and consists mostly of senior government officials like Bindra, Phalgum Matilal, a joint director in the Railway Ministry, Kamlesh Sharma, a joint secretary in the Union Home Ministry and S.K. Kakkar, a senior Chandigarh administration official. They are powerfully backed by Minister of State for Information N.K.P. Salve, Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah and Kamal Nath, the powerful MP who dislodged K.K. Mehra and his friends from the DDCA. Kakkar says that "there is ample scope for smelling a rat" and feels that the bank "might have used the cash for sanctioning loans to various firms" in the wake of the credit squeeze.





Wankhede (left) and Salve: power struggle

In the August 16–17 meeting of the BCCI in Bombay, this group demanded that the Central Bureau of Investigation investigate the matter and that the account be closed. But Rungta was not present and a decision was postponed. For his part, Rungta refutes the allegation that there was anything wrong in opening the account. Said he: "Bindra signed a cheque and gave it to me to be handed over to the treasurer of the board. It is also correct that I handed over the demand draft receipt to Chidambaram." He also claimed that the new account was opened in consultation with the treasurer and the president. But both Chidambaram and Wankhede, when asked in the board meeting, did not accept that they knew about it earlier.

Financial Problems: 'Irregularities' in financial procedures have occurred earlier. Dalmiya had pointed out 54 errors in the audited accounts for 1980-81. The general body meeting in Bangalore on September 28, 1981, took note of his objections which included: glaring discrepancies in the cash and bank balances in accounts presented by the treasurer to the BCCI working committee on August 3, 1980 and figures given out at the Bangalore meeting; Rs 26 lakh expenditure on the Golden Jubilee Test between India and England at Bombay when only Rs 11 lakh was approved; unexplained expenditure of Rs 2 lakh in foreign exchange in England during the 1979 tour; and investment of nearly Rs 1 crore in various private companies by the BCCI investment committee without the approval of the BCCI board or working committee.

This last provoked quite a furore at two meetings of the board. According to the statement of accounts for 1980-81, the private companies so favoured are Tata Oil Mills (Rs 10 lakh), Mahindra and Mahindra (Rs 25 lakh), Bayer India Ltd (Rs 15 lakh), Standard Oil Mills (Rs 15 lakh) and ITC Ltd (Rs 25 lakh). The money came from nationalised banks by prematurely cancelling fixed deposits, and board officials accepted that the board or the working committee did not authorise the withdrawal and that the terms and the conditions were not disclosed earlier. Wankhede and others claimed, however, that no BCCI office-bearer was connected with any of the companies. Only after Dalmiya persisted was an eight-member inquiry committee, headed by Wankhede, appointed to look into these allegations: the final report is still to come even after a year.

Things are likely to come to a head on September 26, 1982, at the elections for the office-bearers. The 'anti-Bombay group' led by Bindra is determined to oust Wankhede and his men and they seem to have numbers on their side: at a recent meeting of their group 16 of the BCCI's 28 members were present. They have reportedly decided to field Salve for the president's post. Says Matilal: "Ours is a democratic fight. We don't want politics and money to spoil Indian cricket; we want to cleanse the BCCI of unscrupulous elements." A pitched battle is clearly in the offing.

—PRABHU CHAWLA

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BANGALORE UNIVERSITY

Making A Mark

EVEN as the marks list scandal in neighbouring Kerala recedes from the glare of media attention, a similar case popped up in Karnataka last fortnight. Moving swiftly, the state Government suspended three top officials of the pre-university board, including its Director, S.P. Satish.

The suspensions, on August 24, which stunned state Education Department officials, followed a preliminary report by the state Vigilance Commission after a three-week probe, following continuing complaints from the public. In a sudden raid conducted by the commission on the offices of the pre-university board in August, 'dirtied' answer papers were seized from the personal possession of the director. Even as a top vigilance official confirmed that a prima facie case existed, a terse government notification announced Satish's suspension.

Satish: under a cloud

When the state Vigilance Commission scrutinised the seized answer papers, it came across several kinds of malpractices. Pages had been removed from some and new ones inserted; answers had been added in blank spaces or on struck out pages. Several answer papers had glaring differences in handwriting and ink. A Vigilance Commission official summed it up neatly: "There is enough material for a best seller on how to cheat in exams the official way."

Fierce Dispute: But the fiercest dispute between pre-university board officials and the Vigilance Commission has been over one particular set of answer papers. These papers had answers which the examiners had in the first place overlooked while correcting the scripts. There is no way to rectify this slip since the board does not have any provision for revaluation. Vigilance sleuths found that following an application for re-totalling by the students, board officials had granted marks for these uncorrected portions. The Vigilance Commission said this amounted to revaluation. Satish, however, insisted that it was not revaluation, but "valuation" and that the marks had been added out of a sense of justice.

This could well have been the case but apparently this 'sense of justice' operated very selectively, as the commission found when they examined 4,000 other applications for re-totalling. They detected portions which had escaped the examiner's eye during valuation. These applications were dismissed with the notation "checked found correct," by the board. Board o were also hard put to explain the malpractices detected. Confronted wi Satish said ruefully: "I cannot be alone for this. The answer paper through several other hands."

Startling Facts: As the commissi deeper, more startling facts came Several of the papers which had had added were of students in the higher category. For example, one student's jumped from 65 to 75 after the valuation. In other cases, students w classes were granted grace marks. Th though the provisions for grace mar that they should only be given t through students on the borderline passing and failing. In a state where increasing commercialisation of educ few additional marks could easily medical or engineering seat going t deserving candidate.

Satish, however, reacted surpris his suspension, attributing it to a

ADMINISTRATION

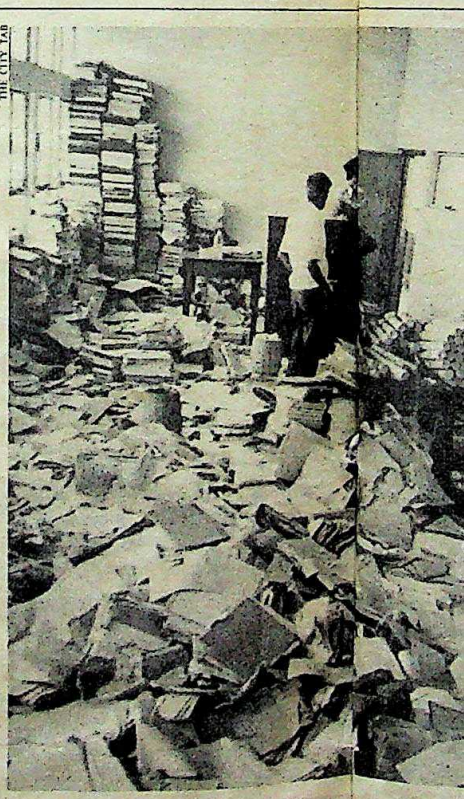
Moving Drama

IT WAS a drama that brought to mind the antics of Mohammed Bin Tughluq. Only six months after the Bangalore University shifted its administrative offices from the sylvan surroundings of Nagarbhavi on the outskirts of the city to the bustle of Central College, preparations were afoot last week for an embarrassing return journey. The net result: the already bankrupt university has wasted a couple of lakhs and become the laughing stock of the state.

The shift was the brainchild of the Vice-Chancellor of Bangalore University, Dr M.N. Vishwanathaiah. Last February, in the face of outraged protests, the vice-chancellor pushed ahead with his plans to shift the university office from its tranquil environs 16 km from the city to Central College, located in the midst of 20 movie theatres in one of the most crowded parts of the city. In the process, he bypassed both the senate and the syndicate of the university, the two premier decision-making bodies.

Reasons: The ostensible reason for the shift into the city was that it would facilitate service to the public. The vice-chancellor dismissed rumours of an "ulterior motive" behind the sudden move. He did not, however, bother to say what would happen to the administrative building at Nagarbhavi—an architectural extravaganza built in 1974 at the cost of Rs 22 lakh. As for bypassing the senate and the syndicate, he claimed that he "did not have to seek their consent."

Stung by that offhand dismissal, the senate and the syndicate retaliated. A 17-member senate committee headed by journalist Jayasheela Rao, unanimously recommended the vice-chancellor to order the return back to Nagarbhavi. The syndicate was even more severe, censuring the vice-chancellor and directing him to shift back to Nagarbhavi before



Files being

August 15. The vice-chancellor ignor the directive. Only after a reminder ca was a circular sent asking the super tendents of various sections to move b to Nagarbhavi campus.

Nobody knows what will happen the Central College building now. M of the college faculties have shifted to

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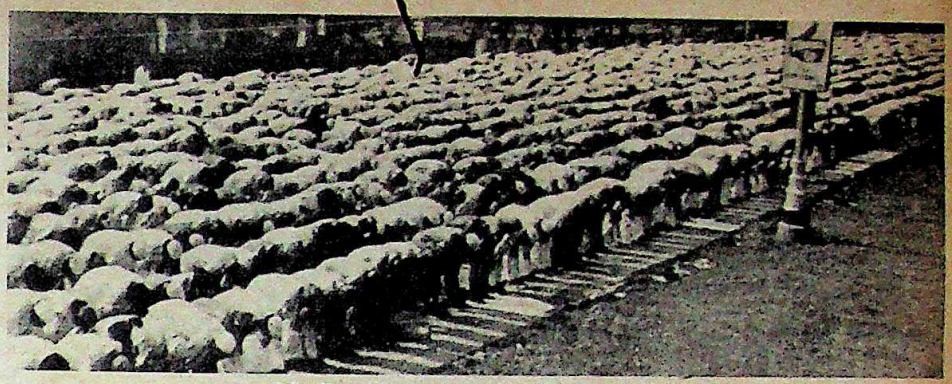

Muslims at namaaz in *A Seventh Man*

Crafted Cameo

A SEVENTH MAN
Produced by the West Bengal Government. Script, music and direction: Ain Rasheed Khan

GHAZALS, courtesans, costumes and chandeliers—such is the make-believe stuff on which the Muslim theme in the Indian cinema is generally built. From *Pakeezah* to *Umrao Jaan*, it is the same sickening tale of misrepresentation of a community as stereotypes in the entertainment industry. M.S. Sathyu's *Garm Hawa*, made in the '60s, was the first major deviation from the beaten trail. But it was a flash in the pan that gleamed in isolation until this year, with Sagar Sarhadi's excellent film, *Bazaar*.

However, the handling of the Muslim theme in documentary cinema does not suffer from such handicaps. Ain Rasheed Khan, who is a former chief of the detective department of Calcutta Police, has made this moving anthropological study of the Muslims in Calcutta with the relentlessly scrutinising eye of an investigator trying to discover a pattern in a random mosaic of cases. The compact-as-a-sonnet 40-minute documentary presents the city's Muslim population in stark socio-economic terms, without the addition of any artistic frill. With 14.6 per cent of the city's population, every seventh man in Calcutta is a Muslim. And, mostly rotting away in their ghettos, they are possibly a half of the urban poor.

Imperious Contempt: Khan's searching camera finds curious textures in the weather-beaten faces of Muslim workers slogging away at tailoring workshops, bakeries, eating houses, automobile garages and printing works. It pans across scores of historical paintings—of Attkins and Doyley, Daniel and Zofany—to zero in on the ubiquitous Mohamedan slave-boy, the khitmutgar, the odd man in a fez cap—drawn in appropriately reduced size to express imperious contempt—who had the temerity to challenge the company's rule and, hence, bore the brunt of retribution.

From the squalor of the Muslim slums of Rajabazar, Khan loops backward to history, and shows Calcutta as a stifling graveyard of Muslim power. Wajed Ali Shah, the last Nawab of Oudh, found refuge in Calcutta after the British had annexed his kingdom. Tipu Sultan's children were interned and kept in the city. For the nawabs of Dacca, Bogra and Murshidabad, Calcutta was the inevitable last destination.

Maybe Khan wanted to portray a 200-year-long process of decline, but his cameos of present-day Calcutta Muslims raise quite a few unanswered questions. It shows the Muslims as some sort of an atavistic group, a community that has nearly lost its power to adapt itself to changes in social attitudes and technology. The Muslim boatman in Khan's film does not know how to combat the challenge of steam barges; the Muslim bangle-maker cannot switch over to mechanised plastic moulding; the *zari*-maker is unable to re-employ his craftsmanship in other areas when popular taste changes.

The film comes to life in a few neatly-shot sequences of frenzy, such as at the soccer field when the Mohammedan Sporting Club enthrals its supporters; at the Muharram celebration with its deep undertone of guilt and violence; and at a *qawwali* show where a fanatic hysterically gyrates to the tune of 'Allah-hu-Allah'. It avoids going deeper into the quake-prone zone of Hindu Muslim relations, but provides in exchange an eminently credible hypothesis that communal harmony can be achieved only at work-places and that human sweat is the best glue that can keep communities together.

The film achieves a fast editing pace, almost like a sitar rhapsody, but never lets attention flag. It does not 'fake' a single shot, which is the best compliment that can be paid to any Indian documentary.

—SUMIT MITRA

by an IAS-IPS clique to malign him."
ement, however, gave an indication
ng battle that has been waged by
ion Department officials who have
gling for the coveted post of commis-
f public instruction, that is usually
officers from the IAS. The Education
ment argues that this bottled up their
onal chances.
is is the second time in the past few
that the pre-university examination
bogged in controversy. In April,
-university exams throughout the
ere postponed after the question
leaked out. As the Vigilance
ssion continues its investigations,
inister Gundu Rao has appointed
itional chief secretary of the state
ment to look into the complete work-
e pre-university board. The Govern-
action was summed up by a board
who said scornfully: "It just goes to
ow much faith the Government itself
he system."

—CHIDANAND RAJGATTA

ngalore University campus.
the vice-chancellor's future is
ubt as he has several charges of
ice and maladministration agai-
Dr Vishwanathaiah was ho-
repentant about the whole af-
aimed, like Tughluq: "Posterity
mber me for what I have done."

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chchanalia

DAAR

rs: Anwar Ali and F.K. Rattonsey
: Ravi Tandon
. Sanjeev Kumar, Amitabh Bach-nod Mehra, Parveen Babi, Tanuja, Goswami, Mehmood and Prem

E RELEASE of an Amitabh achchan film—be it good, bad or different—is always an event. There in numbers of people who flock to e houses just because they're screen-Amitabh-starrer. Satyajit Ray once he can always find a producer who o finance any film he wants to make there are enough people who will Ray film and thus help his producer his cost. The same can now be said mitabh's films. Although only a of his films have been super hits, he more hits to his credit in the past han any other star in a lifetime. And ucer has so far complained he went cause he made a film with Amitabh! *d-daar* is, like all his earlier ones, an film from beginning to the end.

Compared to some of his recent releases like *Dostana, Yarana, Shaan, Desh Premee,* and *Kaalia* this one has a stronger emotional appeal. But *Khud-daar* is enough of a buffet to attract Amitabh's fans in large numbers.

Bachchan: going strong

The film is about a child who flees his village home with his little brother to escape from his terrible sister-in-law while his lovable elder brother is away. The boy, played by Amitabh, grows up with a Muslim family, works hard as an honest taxi-driver and sends his younger brother (Vinod Mehra) to college. But Vinod doesn't share Amitabh's ideas about dignity of labour, honesty and self-respect. Instead, he's after a rich man's only daughter. He's fed up of being poor and is in a hurry to get rich quick, never mind how.

Amitabh goes about reforming just about everybody he meets in the film, including his wayward brother and Parveen Babi, the Christian girl who gives up an illicit liquor trade to win the hero over. Sanjeev Kumar, the elder brother who has been pining for his two lost brothers, finds them 20 years later in the last reel. He rescues Amitabh from a false murder charge. Tanuja, the heartless sister-in-law, too realises her mistakes and seeks the hero's forgiveness—only in the last scene, of course.

Mass Base: Why do people go to see Amitabh? He is a talented and intelligent actor with a powerful and impressive voice. It is perhaps for the first time in the film industry's history that a star has held so much sway not only over the emotional female audiences (like his predecessors Rajesh Khanna and Dharmendra or Dev Anand), but over men and children alike. He has successfully captured audiences ranging from 7-year-olds to 70-year-olds and the craze continues to grow.

No wonder his illness caused so much anxiety. And *The Times* of London wrote last month: "For the film-going public, Amitabh is a mixture of Superman, Valentino, Clarke Gable, James Dean, Clint Eastwood and the superior sort of pop star."

So, why do people see Amitabh's films? One can as well ask: Why do people listen to Lata Mangeshkar? And why do people vote for Indira Gandhi?

—S. VENKAT NARAYAN

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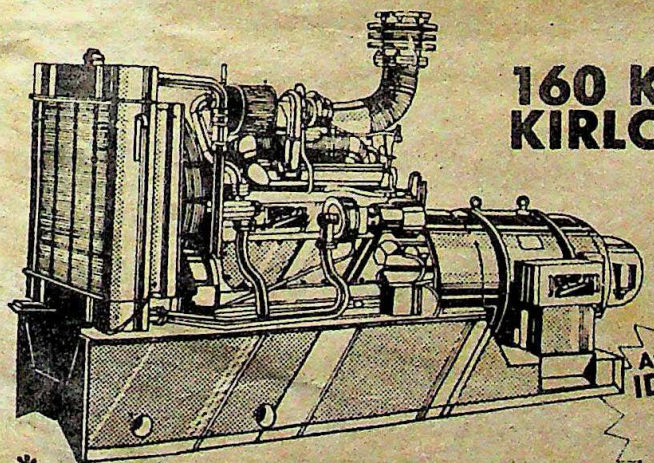

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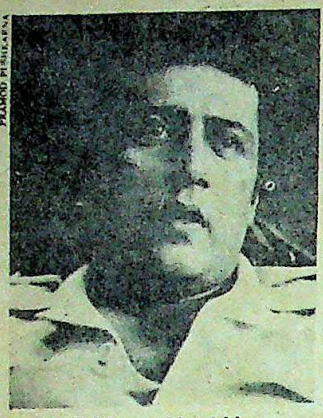
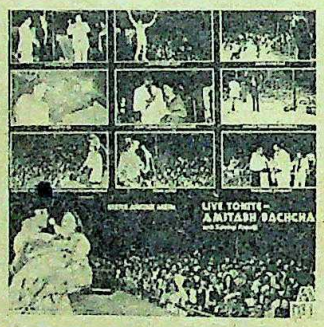


Jaitley: whizz-kid

■ He sold soap in Patiala and worked for the giant India Tobacco Company (ITC) that sells tobacco, hotel rooms and prawns. But he sold himself best. Last fortnight, **Rajan Jaitley**, at 32, became the youngest boss in a public undertaking when he blazoned his way into the squabbly and faction-ridden offices of India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) as its managing director. An MBA from Delhi University, Jaitley's acquaintance with the tourism industry is limited to just five years—he joined ITC's hotel division in 1977. Trade circles were wonderstruck with this whiz-kid's rocketing career. Some surmised that Jaitley clinched the job by his brilliance while others archly hinted at his good connections with the charmed circle around the prime minister's son. Said the short and burly Jaitley, looking more serious than his age: "My principal concern is to build a unidirectional team of officials. We already have the infrastructure."

■ He's alive and well. The superstar, the superman and now the supersinger. Last fortnight the convalescing film personality **Amitabh Bachchan** released an LP *Live Tonite*, a compilation of live shows he had recorded on a tour of the West Indies, Canada and the US, right from the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of Bombay Breach Candy Hospital where he has been lodged since July 27. Produced and released by Music India, the record has come at a time when the Amitabh fever is at its peak and record sales a sure-fire jackpot. Within three days of its release the record, which consists of Bachchan's film hit songs like *Mere Angne Mein* and *Khaike Paan Banaraswala*, crossed an amazing 50,000 mark, joining the ranks of the super-sellers. Towards the end of the fortnight it was on the brink of becoming a gold disc. A quote released along with the record



Bachchan as he appears on the record jacket (top and above): super-seller

by Amitabh said: "I do hope that all who listen to the shows captured on this live recording enjoy them as much as I did performing them."

■ As Bangladesh's best-known, and certainly its most attractive-looking export, **Runa Laila** owes much of her success to the sensational reviews she received in India at the start of her singing career. Last fortnight, the Bengali nightingale was back in India to publicise her latest album recorded in London's Abbey Road studios. Laila, it appears, has finally succumbed to the siren call and the album, composed by **Bappi Lahiri**, is chock full of disco numbers and

Runa Laila: disco time

is being touted by HMV as being potentially a bigger success than *Disco Deewane*, last year's smash hit. Said the attractive singer: "This is the first time I'm having a fling with disco but it was very enjoyable. Specially to work with Bappi again."

■ There's nothing like manipulating the media for one's own use. This must have been the precise thought that ran across All India Radio (AIR) broadcaster **A.S. Murthy's** imaginative head when on August 30, instead of broadcasting his popular talk show about issues of the day, called *Ondu Muthu* (A Word With You) over AIR's Bangalore sta-

Murthy: foot in mouth

tion, he set about airing his personal problems to unsuspecting listeners. Said he: "All these days I have been one with you. But there are people who are trying to keep us apart. So be it." Murthy's indiscretion resulted in his suspension till AIR bosses in Delhi decide his fate.

■ Amritraj Inc. is al
well and apparently flou
While elder brothers Vi
Anand continue to ea
bucks on the tennis ma
round, with occasional
into the television b
Ashok, 24, the yo
member of the tennis t
branched out into films.
the banner of Amritraj P
tions, Ashok is prepa
launch *Nine Tiger Man*,
million dollar film for w

Ashok: starry sweeps

has just bought the righ
Twentieth Century Fox

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novel by Lesley Blanch
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between a Rajput princ
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Tight-lipped about who
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the Amritraj brothers an
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while, Ashok has ot
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Ltd, the Commander'
of the Order of Merit
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■ **Died:** S.C. Sarkar,
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